This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

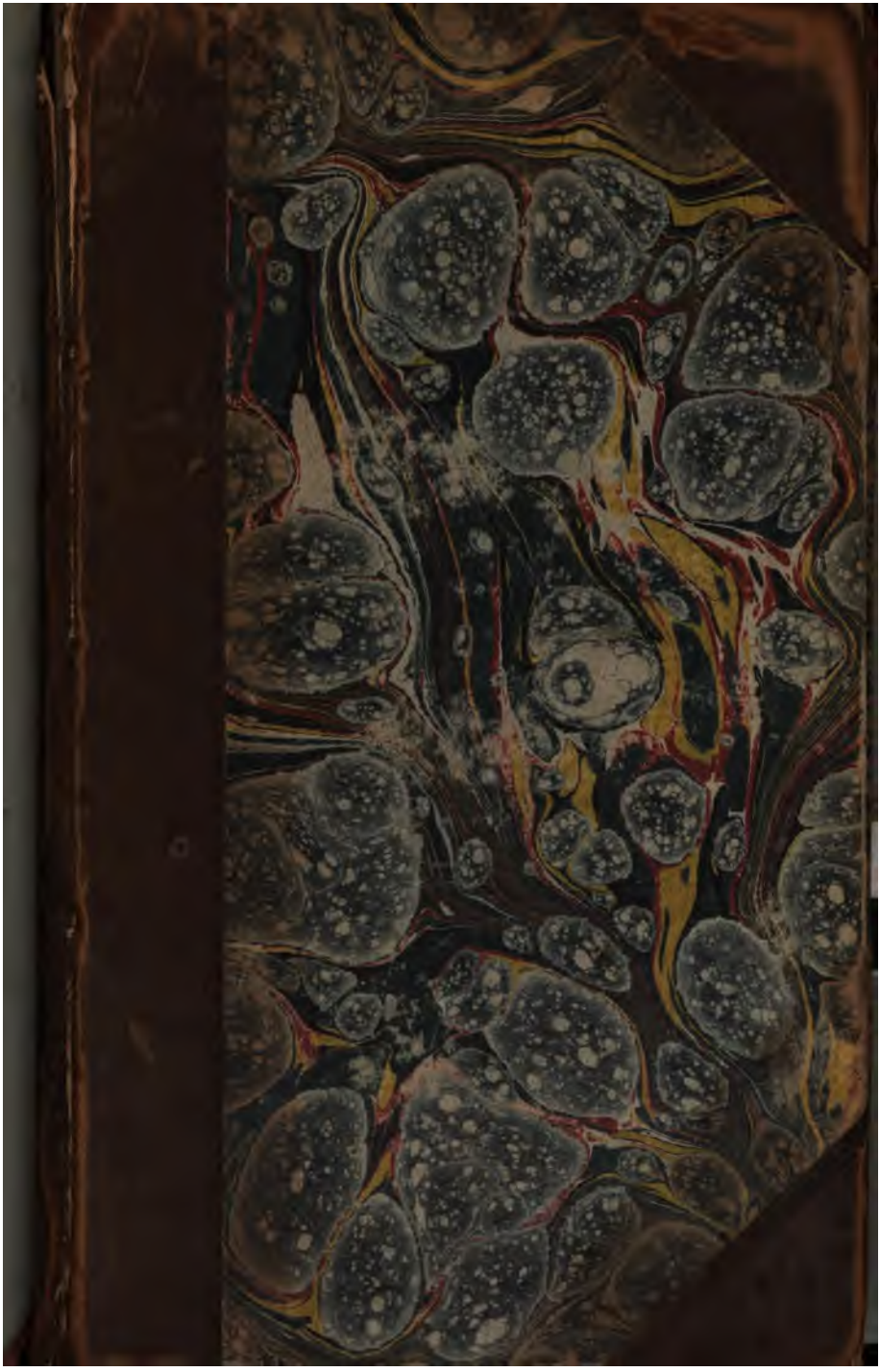
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`



600041873T

33.
68.

SERMONS

ON THE

PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

SERMONS

ON

THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY

INCULCATED IN THE

Holy Scriptures,

AND THEIR

APPLICATION TO THE PRESENT CONDITION OF SOCIETY.

By W. J. FOX.

LONDON:
CHARLES FOX, PATERNOSTER ROW.

MDCCCXXXIII.

6 8.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WILLIAM CLOWES,
Duke Street, Lambeth.

PREFACE.

THIS Volume is published in part fulfilment of the intention expressed as follows, in the Preface to the Discourses, entitled 'Christ and Christianity.'

"Should the present publication meet with sufficient attention to encourage him to proceed, it is the Author's intention that it should be speedily followed by another of about the same extent, on 'The Apostles and their Preaching;' and ultimately to complete his plan by a Series of Discourses on 'The Holy Scriptures, their History, Theology, Morality, Poetry, and Philosophy.'"

The reception of that publication was such as to afford abundant encouragement; but various circumstances have occasioned delay, and have also induced an alteration in the order of the projected works. The present volume is offered as a portion of the last-mentioned Series, which will require ampler limits than were originally allotted to it. Should the Author, by successive publications, arrive at its completion, a set of title-pages will be given with the last volume, showing the con-

nexion of the whole; while, meantime, each separate publication may, it is hoped, possess some interest independently, and apart from its relation to the endeavour to illustrate the general scope of the Divine dispensations.

This Volume, like its predecessors, consists of Discourses not written or delivered in sequence, but prepared for the pulpit in the ordinary course of the Author's ministrations, and now linked together by their common reference to 'Christian Morality.'

The reader will not, therefore, expect a delineation of 'the Whole Duty of Man,' in all its details, but simply a statement of those principles from which, according to the Author's view of the subject, all virtues are derived, accompanied by the enforcement of such applications of them as are peculiarly required by the present condition of society.

Upper Clapton, July, 1833.

CONTENTS.

	Page
SERMON I.	
The Christian Mission	1
SERMON II.	
Christian Morality	19
SERMON III.	
The Principle of Goodness . . .	37
SERMON IV.	
The Law of the Lord	55
SERMON V.	
Wisdom and Folly	71
SERMON VI.	
Human Brotherhood	87
SERMON VII.	
Blessing the Poor	117
SERMON VIII.	
The Law of Labour	135
SERMON IX.	
Gather up the Fragments . . .	151
SERMON X.	
The Social Example of Christ . . .	167

Page

SERMON XI

Mental Hospitality 183

SERMON XII.

Rejoice evermore 197

SERMON XIII.

Moral Incongruities 213

SERMON XIV.

Elevation of Sentiment 231

SERMON XV.

On the Subornation of Insincerity . . 247

SERMON XVI.

On Temptation. Part I.—Avoidance . . 261

SERMON XVII.

On Temptation. Part II.—Resistance . . 277

SERMON XVIII.

On Sabbatical Observances . . . 291

SERMON XIX.

Religious Reformation 307

SERMON XX.

Probation and Judgment 323

SERMON I.

THE CHRISTIAN MISSION.*

LUKE iv. 18, 19.

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord."

THERE is not an element or an object in material nature—there is not a science or an art—there is not an event in history, or a condition of society—there is not an intellect, or a faculty of intelligence, but what may be regarded as having a mission, and a divine mission too, for the accomplishment of some portion of the all-comprehensive plan of Providence. God maketh the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers. It is the highest and the happiest state of an intelligent being to know whereunto he is sent, and to fulfil his mission

* Preached on the re-opening of Finsbury Chapel, after repairs, November 18, 1832.

with his might. To estimate with accuracy the position which we occupy in the world; the manner and degree in which it may be improved; and the good which in it we may realize for ourselves and others; this is to have the fairest prospect of answering the design of our existence, and becoming the authors and the possessors of the largest measure of enjoyment. This is what the text shows us Christ did. He knew why he came into the world; the end and the means were distinctly before him; and so he ran his appointed course, bore his cross and gained his crown.

There is much confusion in the minds of many persons about both miracles and missions. An undue importance has been attached to the difference between what is called *natural*, and what we term *supernatural*. The great question is, has the world a *plan*?—Had it an *author*? Is there a God, whose power is resistless, and whose agency is universal? If there be, the importance of that difference is much diminished, or rather, the nature of that difference is more distinctly ascertained. The reluctance of some to admit such a thing as a miracle, and the horror of others at those who doubt miracles, are alike exaggerated. They both seem to ascribe an independent and inherent force to the laws of nature. That expression continually misleads. With the admission of a providential plan, the phrase *law of nature* can only mean, the

uniformity of exertion of the Divine agency. The supernatural is, then, distinguished from the natural, not by its greater difficulty of accomplishment, but simply by its rareness. The natural and the supernatural are alike God's acts, only the one is common, the other uncommon; but both rational and credible; as both may be portions of a common plan, directed to a common object. It is a bad definition of a miracle, that it violates a law of nature. What we call laws of nature, are of different orders in an ascending scale, and each is liable to an apparent suspension, by the interposition of that which is above it. The principles of mechanical action are often suspended by coming into contact with those of chemical combination, as those of chemical combination are, where the principle of vitality is introduced. There is yet a higher set of laws, those of mind, interfering with and modifying all below; and above these, in the universal plan, are moral principles, which may necessitate still more comprehensive and striking deviations, but which equally claim to be included in that great code which shall comprise the laws of nature. In this view *resurrection* may be as much in the order of nature, and be as improperly called, the violation of a law, as birth or death, or even the commonest instance of cause and effect in a mechanical operation. Could all the miracles of the Old and the New Testament be accounted for naturally,

i. e., could they be assigned to a lower class of the laws of nature, rather than to the highest, they would still demonstrate plan, divine plan; and it would, therefore, still be true that Moses had his mission to deliver Israel, and Christ to redeem the world. The plan, the specified work, the selected and prepared agent, these demonstrate the mission.

It might be supernaturally that Christ knew that God sent him; but this prevents not our reasoning upon his mission; and from that to the mission of others. We do not thereby lose the application of his example. As he knew, others may also know, that God has allotted them a work, and sent them into the world for its performance. There are many men, and many classes of men beyond the boundaries of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, whom we may regard as having been vested with a special mission. The heroes and legislators of remote antiquity had their mission; it was to organize society, and lay the foundations, rough and rude though they might be, of that edifice, which successive ages should toil in the completion of. The philosophers of Greece, Socrates, and his school especially, had their mission; it was to check the mystifications of theory and the grossnesses of idolatry, to make virtue tangible and practicable, institute an experiment on the power of reason, and prepare the way for its combination with revelation. The Catholic priesthood

of the middle ages had their mission; it was to mitigate the ferocity and pride of a warlike aristocracy; to mediate between the powerful and the defenceless, and to direct the world by intelligence and influence, which, though often perverse, were yet a better agency than that which they restrained. The Protestant reformers had their mission; it was to break the spell of antiquity and uniformity, to expose corruption and abuse, to demolish the one great tyranny of Rome, though by the erection of a hundred petty tyrannies, and set the example of intellectual resistance, independence, and freedom. These were all as bands of labourers called forth to particular work, which was reserved for them, and for which they were prepared. The state of the world around them, the evils and miseries which abounded, the prospect by certain modes of action of mitigating or annihilating those evils, their keen sense of the suffering and degradation they saw, and their soul's high impulse to wage therewith a holy warfare; these were the indications and the evidence of their mission; and it was of God.

They, and all who like them have, for some good and glorious purpose, thought and acted, toiled and suffered, must have felt and known the fact, essentially, that they had a mission. The consciousness of it must have been their impulse, their strength, and their reward. For it is impulse, strength and reward, for a man to feel himself privileged and

called to the destruction of evil, and the creation of good. A mind with such an in-dwelling consciousness is its own heaven—a heaven of activity, beneficence and happiness. Little can they be appreciated by those who think God's moral government not vindicated unless good people become wealthy, and the philosophers and reformers of an age be installed in the high places of political authority, and religion parade the streets in costly robes. The world knows them not, for they are not of the world. This pure, fervid, high-minded, good-giving, and self-satisfying spirit is the spirit of Christ which dwelt in them; and in the perfection of man's nature, shall dwell in all. And as many as are led by the spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Those who first excited theological controversy, on points which superstitious ignorance, perverse acuteness, and fraudulent ambition had corrupted, had no ignoble mission. From Socinus and Davides to Priestley and Belsham, they were workmen that needed not to be ashamed, explorers and restorers of the long-lost truth of ages. In many a mist had they to grope, and through many a wilderness to wander—many a mountain to level, and valley to exalt; and entangled were they in crooked ways, which had to be made straight, and rough places which, with toil and tears, they were to render plain, before they could prepare the way of the Gospel, and behold

the glory of God, which it was promised should be revealed to all flesh. They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them; and we are entered into their labours, and our reward is with us, for our work is before us. If their mission was to inquire and prove, ours is to know and practise. If theirs was to clear away the corruptions of the Gospel, ours is to appreciate its simplicity and beauty—if theirs was to demolish error, ours is to build up truth—if their mission was for destruction, ours is for renovation. They rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, that we may behold the glory of the resurrection. Pure religion is no longer to be taught negatively, but positively. It is time to turn away from the contemplation of that which we renounce, to that which we believe; and to exhibit our principles to the world, not merely as the antithesis of superstition, but as the vehicle of religious truth and moral power; not as a *caput mortuum*, remaining after all other theological notions have been evaporated, but as a purified and vital essence which tends to penetrate and pervade all things. It is not, therefore, to provoke a conflict with the advocates of the trinitarian mystery that we proclaim, God is one; but to win his creatures' hearts and minds to admiration of the sublimity of his nature, the harmony of his works, and the universality of his providence. It is not merely to refute the legendary incarnation and

Godhead of Christ, that we point to the beautiful, touching and inspiring proofs of his perfect humanity, perfect in every sense, recorded by his biographers; but that we may lead man, as a brother, to trust, love and follow him, coming unto him with meek and lowly hearts, and when weary and heavy-laden, taking his yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light, and finding rest for their souls. It is not merely to explode so monstrous a legal fiction of barbarian justice as the theory of substitution and satisfaction, that we affirm God's unpurchased and abounding mercy to the penitent, and preach holiness as the condition and commencement of salvation; but that we may lead men from resting in faith or forms to renewal in the moral image of God, the cultivation of all Christian graces, and the formation of a character so pure, exalted and beneficent, that it seems to bear Heaven's seal, and be itself the pledge of immortality and happiness. It is not to confute such dogmas as those of election and reprobation that we declare the great scriptural social doctrine of the universal brotherhood of mankind; but to establish the true morality, public and private, in head, heart and life; to make charity, justice and philanthropy, a natural affection; and level the barriers which have isolated hearts, and over-shadowed intellects; and in elevating, unite and blend the whole race into one family. Nor is it merely as a protest against the

wild and fearful denunciation of eternal torments, that we assert the corrective nature of divine punishment, and the final universal restoration; but that our souls may enter into this grand conception of the divine plan, that with the exile of Patmos, we may have a glimpse of this glorious and gladdening vision, may feel the sublimity of the love which it implies in God, and inspires in us, and walk as children of the light, which though it shine from afar, yet lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and rejoice therein with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is in furtherance of such purposes, that by the zeal, liberality and perseverance of this congregation, this chapel has been founded and supported, and is now again opened for worship and instruction. We believe that in this, we are aiming at no sectarian object, are cherishing no sectarian feelings, are consulting no sectarian interests. It is a religious and social mission which devolves upon us, as disciples of Christ, and is included within the comprehensive scope and characterized by the benignant spirit of the description of his own mission in the text. And how divine a mission that was in its nature, as well as in its origin! How broad and grand and beautiful! His words are as the breathings of a spirit of love, brooding over the chaos of human ignorance, bondage and wretchedness. He seems to survey the world with

a sympathy that feels a pang for every pang, and with that yet keener anguish which weeps for the degradation of those who are sunk so low as not to feel that they are degraded. He turns not away from the agonizing scene; he neither stifles his emotions, nor hardens his heart; but the power of agony becomes the impulse of beneficence; his sense of it is a vocation to be a deliverer and a saviour; and in the strength of it he devotes himself a sacrifice for the world. Signs from without confirm the sign within; the thunder of heaven responds to the deep voice in his own bosom; and thus God sent his Son, that the world might pass from darkness unto light, and from moral death to life everlasting.

And not only are we called to a public, social, and Christian work, in the assertion of those great moral principles which constitute the worth and glory of our religion, in the application of them to the present condition of mankind, and to existing opinions, manners and institutions; not only are we called to sustain them by the spirit of our devotional practices, and by the tendency of the instructions which are delivered, and the observances which are performed within these walls from time to time; but there is also on each individual, the most obscure and most dependent, an obligation and a mission; a work which God hath given him to do, towards the just conception and the efficient discharge of which, these services should tend to

furnish a guidance. For every one does some peculiarity of constitution, training, circumstance, ability, and opportunity, indicate an individual sphere of action and a personal mission of beneficence.

Infinitely varied are they, for so are we. There are those on whom it is imperative that they should be much in struggle, and in conflict, the restrainers of bad men, and the exposers of bad principles, doomed, or rather consecrated, to a state of antagonism, their vocation for the promotion of good being best discharged by the acute detection of the fraud, and unflinching hostility to the force, which induce general suffering for a supposed particular advantage. There are others whose mission, tending to the same point, is pursued by an opposite path, whose condition is not one of antagonism, but of sympathy, who are with the poor to gladden them, with the broken-hearted to heal them, with the captives to liberate them, on the same principle as the others have to confront the oppression that impoverishes, chains and crushes. And if even amongst the fiends of hell (as the poet painted hell) there were those, who 'apart sat on a hill retired, and reasoned high of Providence,' much more may there be good men, who 'through the loop-holes of retreat peep at the busy world,' and watch more truly than the actors, the progress of the scene, and perceive the elements of harmony even in the season of confusion, and behold a God making all

things work together for good, and from the purity and elevation of their own mental atmosphere, send forth into the troubled world, like the dove from the ark of the patriarch, messengers of serenity and hope and promise. And there are those who have a gentler and more bounded ministry, seemingly more limited at least, though in reality with an expansiveness which may bear it beyond many that are deemed the most extensive, and that are the most conspicuous. She who carefully and tenderly constructed the little boat of bulrushes in which the infant Moses floated safely on the Nile, unknowingly but holily contributed her portion towards the splendid triumph of Israel's emancipation from Egyptian bondage. Nor less holy would have been her task, nor less divine her mission, had the child's destiny been only to feed the flocks of Jethro upon the pastures of Midian. From those to whom the physical safety of the infant human being in its fragility, or the soothing of age in its infirmity, is a care, to those who fill man's little separate world, with order, harmony, and gladness; to those who are as the fire from heaven that was said, in times of old, to descend and consume the sacrifice on the altar, and who kindle and inspire all that is high and holy in human intellect or energy; through all these, woman has her mission too, equal with, though varied from that of man, and often full alike of peril and of glory;

as was theirs who stood by the cross when the disciples fled, and came to the sepulchre before the disciples stirred.

The great difficulty of the preacher and the moralist, a difficulty only to be overcome by the co-operation of those to whom his exhortations are addressed, is, that men so often either mistake their vocation, or deny that they have one at all. This last is the negation of the religious principle, whatever be the professed faith and practised forms of the individual; a worse negation of it than any form of speculative unbelief. There is no religion in him who considers not himself as part of a whole, and bound to act in relation to that whole. It is not religion, without regard of others to think of working out, or believing out, our own salvation; that salvation being a future life of selfish gratification to follow a life of useless mortification or useless performances here. Religion is the link which binds all beings together; the visible and the invisible, the rich and the poor, the sound-hearted and the broken-hearted, the prisoner and the free. If Christ knew his own mission, this is Christianity. Why should I not eat, drink, sleep and live, solely for myself? Why?—because you were sent into the world for other and better things. Because this is not really living for yourself: nor is any thing, but the fulfilment of the purposes for which God created man upon the earth. Obligation is

interest — the interest, *i. e.*, that looks high enough, and far enough, to see the truth of things. There is no divine reward, *i. e.*, there is no real and lasting happiness, but in the fulfilment of our appointed work, and that eventually is its own exceeding great reward. And how shall we discover what that is? Search your own hearts; know yourselves, your capabilities and tendencies; study your relations to society, and the view will soon open upon your soul, and your path be as the light. Oh! the vanity of spending life in wishing for that which cannot be realized, and battling with that which cannot be vanquished. How many are ever aiming at that which they cannot be, and neglecting that which they might be! What would not the slave do, if he were but master; and the poor if he had but wealth; and the circumscribed if they had but extended influence? As if slavery, and poverty, and circumscription and obscurity, had not their mission for scattering most precious blessings among those about them, to be measured back into their own bosoms. Not but that there are discrepancies, numerous and galling, in the artificial frame-work of society, by which powers of usefulness are restrained, and tendencies to mischief are cherished; by which the poor are pressed lower down in poverty, and the natural fruits of industry and ability are checked in their growth, and withered before they ripen; which

make many feel, that so far as externals are concerned, they are not placed according to their capacity, nor rewarded according to their works; but these are amongst the evils, and foremost amongst them, which should excite the spirit of reformation. Meanwhile, whatever each one's sphere of good, let him fill it; whatever each one's race of righteousness, let him run it; whatever opportunity each coming hour may afford for strengthening the mind or elevating the heart, for acquiring or imparting knowledge, for correcting error or revealing truth, for lightening affliction, or increasing enjoyment, for smoothing life's asperities, or surmounting its difficulties; or for incidental or general benevolence, or for that particular good which each may be best qualified to promote; whatever of this thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. 'Herein,' said Christ, 'is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so are ye my disciples.'

Thus was it, that he fulfilled his mission; by what deeds and sufferings the evangelical records tell, and you well know. How he realized it by his teachings it will be the object of these lectures to evince*. I have selected their topics for that purpose. These are the means as to doctrine, by which he showed the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of

* This was the first Sermon of a course on the subjects afterwards mentioned.

counsel and of might. They will all be further illustrations of his mission. The next subject will be the character of God; and never more than in exhibiting the divine loveliness did Christ preach glad tidings to the poor, give sight to the blind, freedom to the captive, and healing to the broken-hearted. His proclamation of the universal paternity of God was full of blessing for mankind. It made devotion a filial homage, and morality a brotherly affection. Never in creation, miracle, or prophecy, was God so glorified, as in the revelation that he is our Father. That description of him is a standard by which to try the purity of a religion to the end of the world. It is the criterion, it is the source and inspiration of our faith and worship. Well did Christ fulfil his mission of moral renovation, and of consolation and hope, when he enabled us to say, 'Now are we the sons of God.' The third subject is the principle of morality. And in this too, shall we have to show, how Christ fulfilled his mission. The principle of Christian morality is that of utility in its best and purest, its broadest and its highest sense. Christ first inculcated this, distinctly and consistently, with all the comprehensiveness of a principle, the precision of a law, the pithiness of a proverb, the inducement of an interest, and the power of the most touching persuasion. Who could mitigate the world's sorrows, and abate its vanities and animo-

sities, and augment its blessings, like Him who gave religious sanction to the precepts, 'Love one another; do unto all men, as ye would that they should do unto you.' The next topic is the education of the human race; of whom Christ was the most efficient instructor, not only in his personal teachings, but by the light he threw upon that whole plan of Providence, to which we owe all real wisdom; by which mankind has been conducted thus far on the great and gradual ascent of intelligence and goodness; and which, beginning with the earthly elements amongst which primeval ignorance must grovel, rises to the very heaven of heavens. And thus shall we come to that universal and deeply interesting topic with which the course will terminate, futurity:—futurity, with its promise of earth's improvement, to which Christ pointed for man's encouragement; futurity, with its individual revival, which Christ exhibited for man's faith; and futurity, with its grand final consummation of universal restoration, towards which Christ showed Providence and grace advancing for man's perfect blessedness.

By attention to such topics shall we approximate towards just and adequate conceptions of Christ's mission, enter into that enlargement of spirit which becomes his disciples, and uphold that pure faith and worship to which this place is consecrated.

SERMON II.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY.

MATTHEW vii. 12.—Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them.

ROMANS xiii. 10.—Love is the fulfilling of the law.

1 TIMOTHY iv. 8.—Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

THESE three texts contain in their combination, the sum and substance of all moral philosophy. They comprise the essence, scope, tendency and sanction of that view of our social relations and obligations, which it was the mission of Christ to introduce into the world. The first is a practical rule, most easy of application. In default of a well-digested system, or the opportunity of an elaborate calculation, it apprizes every man of an efficient substitute to which he may have instantaneous recourse. And there are two remarkable advantages attending its use—1st. That it makes gross selfishness self-destructive. It taxes a man's

efforts on behalf of others in the same proportion as he is desirous of taxing their efforts on behalf of himself. Therefore, on those who crave most of others, *i. e.*, the most selfish, it imposes that they should do the most for others, *i. e.*, be the most benevolent. The other advantage is, that it becomes an increasingly efficient rule for the promotion of good to mankind, in proportion to the intellectual power of the being who acts upon it. The wiser a man is, the better he knows what to wish for from others for himself; the better is he directed by this rule to benefit others. He becomes, in its application, the agent of more extensive good. The second text quoted, declares the principle or spirit of that conduct which the first guides in the practice of. The rule to do as we would be done by, when its rationale is sought, resolves itself into the theory that 'love is the fulfilling of the law.' The rule conducts us to the principle, which, in turn, as it is understood, guides us to the more unerring and useful application of the rule. And to this, the third text adds, that which rule and principle alike require for ensuring their adoption, the adequate motive. That motive is of the most comprehensive and cogent description. It involves the happiness of the individual as its object; pleads the promise of God as its security; and extends over both the present and the future; the life that now is, and that which is to come.

It has been said, that what in one age is a truth of revelation, becomes a truth of reason in a subsequent age. And it is evident that such must be the tendency of all revealed truth. Revelation *discovers*; but it can only discover that which exists, and is comprehensible. Its discoveries may, therefore, be by reason eventually comprehended and demonstrated. The supernatural facts of the divine dispensations suggested thoughts which may be verified by experience, and become the subjects of natural demonstration. It was thus with the divine unity; which, at first associated with miracle, is now seen in nature; at first promulgated by authority, is now the dictate of rationality. And so it is with Christian morals, and the Christian principle of morality. In the light of the word of God, man has become able to see light, and the faculty and scope of his mental vision have been enlarged and strengthened by the uprising on the world of the Sun of Righteousness. God at first led the blind by a way which they knew not, that at length Christ might say, 'Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.' Christ's precepts came with, 'I say unto you,' that we might learn to say them to ourselves. Revelation is an anticipatory process. It did with the world what we do with children; suggest moral truth, which can never be known too soon, the very suggestion aiding the developement of the powers which should in time

achieve its demonstration. And the world is benefited by the one process, as the child by the other. As the one implies a parent and a teacher, so does the other a Deity and a Saviour. Christ's mission by the spirit of God for healing, comfort and deliverance was in nothing more efficient than in his announcement of the principle and blessings of moral goodness; nor can that announcement ever have appeared so glorious, so worthy of God, so useful to man, as in the light shed upon it, in the demonstration of its truth and perfection by the highest maturity of reason and philosophy which the world has yet attained.

Christian morality is the true, sound and only morality; the morality of philosophical utility; that which has for its rule the production of the greatest happiness of all, and for its result the highest and most enduring happiness of the individual. The principle of this morality, which is alike the morality of reason and revelation, of future blessedness and present usefulness, is laid deep in our very constitution. Its foundation is in the essentials of humanity, of intelligent existence. It is in the fact that our own highest happiness is linked with, and requires, the consciousness of promoting to the utmost the happiness of others. This is the law of happiness, which, if men degrade or violate, their pursuit of happiness is only vanity and vexation of spirit. That this can and does impart

the purest and most enduring satisfaction is alike evidenced by the reflections of the philosopher, and the observations of experience. The very pleasures of sense have their greatest zest when social. Those of the heart are direct reflexes from others; beyond the boundaries of self must the imagination extend for its brightest regions; and intellectual truth delights by its discovery, as we behold its consequences flowing far and wide over human occupations and enjoyments. And the fact corresponds with these inferences from man's original constitution. It is no more in history than in nature, for an enlightened philanthropist to be a miserable man. To *be good* is to *do good*, and to do good is to receive good. Men are long in seeing this, because they regard externals so much more than what passes within; and because it is only as the mind becomes enlightened that it becomes susceptible of the best and purest kinds of enjoyment. A law resting only on authority requires to be fenced with positive rewards and punishments. But as the requirement of the law is seen and understood to be really the pursuit of an interest, rewards and punishments resolve themselves into natural consequences. With the progress of reason, the notions of obligation, duty, obedience, become only the enlightened pursuit of happiness, according to those laws, material, mental, and moral, in conformity with which alone can happiness be realized. Not vainer was

the alchemist's attempt, in ignorant defiance of the laws of nature, to transmute the baser metals into gold, than is theirs, who, in equal ignorance of the laws of mind, attempt to distil happiness from the baser passions and propensities of our nature. Happiness is not in wealth or splendour, power or fame. Its highest degree has probably been realized under the worst outward circumstances; and he who acts consistently for the greatest happiness of all, will be sure to find his own included.

The beauty of this moral principle is, that it applies, with equal facility, to all the varying states of human existence. It belongs as much to our own country as to that in which Christ taught; as much to our own age as to that in which Christ lived. No condition of barbarism is below it; no pinnacle of civilization overtops it. It is the eternal summary of social morality. A collection of the precepts of the New Testament would show how the first preachers of Christianity applied it to their circumstances. In those precepts we should find some things universal, others peculiar; some duties indicated, such as temperance, diligence, &c., which arise out of our nature; others, which grew out of the condition of political slavery, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, the practice of surrounding idolaters, and other peculiarities of their temporary social relations. What we have to do here is to follow them in applying the principle to

our circumstances, as they applied it to theirs. Many people do gross injustice to Scripture morality, and pervert their own consciences, by looking only at the particular precepts; forgetting that on the same plan now, some of these precepts would become comparatively inapplicable, others would have been modified, and new ones been added in correspondence with new circumstances. It would be well if this were done more in detail than has yet been attempted. There is, perhaps, less difficulty in obtaining assent to the proposition that the production of the greatest amount of happiness is the object of moral effort, than in showing *how* it can be advanced. This requires reflection; and too many are unhappily addicted to think morality not the subject of reflection—they are too easily satisfied that they know their duty. No man can understand that, any more than any other subject, without attention and thought. To promote others' good, implies an enlightened and correct perception of others' good. What constitutes this? The reply describes our obligations under the Christian law and principle. I shall attempt a brief answer.

1st. It is good for man to have physical health and agreeable sensations; to have all the faculties of his body properly developed, brought to maturity, kept in harmonious action, and made the source of all pleasurable sensation which does not involve in its consequences an overbalance of pain.

Every gratuitous infliction of bodily pain is therefore immoral,—the blow of passion, the wanton lash on the slave, the unreforming and undeterring torture of the criminal. In crowded cities the condition of thousands is so wretched, that half the children born die under two years of age; for this there is no natural necessity, and its continuance marks public immorality. For every obstruction of pleasurable sensation, for every act which occasions painful sensation, there should be a valid reason in the subservience thereof to greater enjoyment, or it is immoral.

2nd. Knowledge is good for man. Its communication is a virtue, its prevention is a vice. When the Apostles wrote the Scriptures, they were moral; when the Romish hierarchy prevented the circulation of those Scriptures, they were immoral. Knowledge is virtue. A perfect knowledge of a man's own interest, in the purest and highest acceptation of the term, would determine his will to perfect goodness. The relative importance of different kinds of knowledge should be accurately estimated. This would accelerate that reformation of education which has commenced, and make it the vehicle of more useful instruction. Few things are more virtuous than multiplying the facilities of all dependent upon us, and of society so far as we can act upon it, for the attainment of knowledge. Benevolence may do this in many ways, comparatively

easy; as, in the hands of Christ, five loaves fed famishing thousands.

3rd. The development and exercise of our intellectual faculties is good for man: the maturity of judgment, taste, imagination, and all the 'high capacious powers' which in so many 'lie folded up.' Each of these is a ministry of good to the possessor: there is happiness for the man of science in his researches; for the artist in his perceptions and imitations of beauty; and for the poet in his creations. There is enjoyment, rich and large, for those who can merely appreciate what they perform. These are faculties of which the germs exist in all: it is virtue to cherish them. Professed religionists have much to answer for: they have often aimed at preventing reasoning, which is to crush the power of reasoning. Many dislike others thinking freely, because they love subserviency to their own judgments. All this is vicious. As we should bring a plant to the full growth of its stem, and expansion of its leaves, and beauty of its blossoms, so should we subserve and delight in the cherishing of every faculty of the soul, until human intelligence shall generally attain and exhibit its full proportions.

4th. The affections were implanted in man's nature for his happiness. They are his moral wealth. Rightly to be their subject and their object is his blessedness. The Roman character was

vicious, for its superstructure was raised on the ruins of private affections. The Jewish character was vicious, for beyond a certain circle, instead of affections, it cherished antipathies. Every system which tends to the suppression of feeling is vicious, for affection as well as intellect should be expanded and strengthened to its full development. Christ's fervency of feeling was a wonder to the Jews; and made them exclaim, when they saw him at the tomb of Lazarus, 'Behold how he loved him.' False shame at emotion, the affectation of cold-heartedness, restrictions on the expression of the heartfelt appreciation of excellence, attempts that can only produce selfishness if they act on the mind, hypocrisy if they only reach the manners, tend to diminish, and to diminish without corresponding good, the happiness of which man is capable from this source, and are therefore vicious, as the opposite course is therefore that of morality.

5th. It is good for man that he should occupy his proper relative position in society. Whatever therefore tends to place all men according to their capacities and aptitudes, is virtuous; and whatever tends to keep them where they have less enjoyment in themselves, and are less useful to others, is vicious. No man can be happy in a situation for which he is unfitted. The parent is immoral who only calculates how his child may be wealthiest, instead of studying the harmony of his character

with the situation for which he destines him. An ecclesiastical system which lures into the office of teacher those who are not superior to others in the faculties of acquiring and communicating knowledge, is an immoral system. To obstruct the attainment of political rights by those who are qualified to use them, is an immoral act. We are virtuous whenever we aid men to gain the positions in society for which they are best adapted; and vicious whenever, from envy, prejudice, indolence, or any other cause, we uphold those dislocations which produce so much of misery.

6th. Religion is good for man. It is the recognition of his relation to the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of the world. It is the source of abundant enjoyment, consolation, and hope. The tediousness or repulsiveness of its services; the artificial gloom in which it is sometimes shrouded; the dogmatism with which doctrine is asserted, and the asperity with which controversy is waged; these, and whatever else tend to alienate men's feelings from religion, are therefore immoralities. By them we create hinderances to their possession of this exalted species of enjoyment; we interpose, it may be unintentionally, between mankind and their Father in heaven.

It is but the barest outline or index of the leading particulars into which man's well-being may be distributed, which has now been stated. Both the

science and the art of happiness should have a much more systematic attention than has yet been bestowed upon them. We cannot well and wisely serve our generation, until we know how that service can best be rendered. We have rested too long in the letter of precepts, without heeding their spirit; in the forms of morality, without regarding its essence; and in the traditions and conventionalisms of society, without ascending to the everlasting principles of human nature and human happiness. This must we do, as well as rectify doctrinal corruptions, if we would be men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is evident, that to be moral, we have more to do than simply to abstain from those grosser vices which bring so speedily their punishment, in the loss of health, wealth, and reputation, or than to conform with those external regulations with which society is satisfied. In our view of morality many topics rise into an importance which is not assigned to them in commonplace manuals of duty. How momentous, for instance, are religious opinions and practices! How far have they misled many, reckoned amongst the best of men, from the Christian principle of morality! According to the current theology, the greatest amount of human enjoyment is not the object either of man or God. They make virtue to consist in blind faith or obedience; represent reward as positive, and punishment as eternal.

They create sins by the misapplication of precepts, and overlook virtues by the non-application of principles. Much of what is supposed to constitute a good man is made to consist in performances, or abstinences, which are alike useless to himself, and to all the world besides. Every enlightened man must desire that this perversion of the powers of the world to come should be rectified. An intelligible aim, beneficent as well as intelligible, should be given to human exertion, especially to that exertion as stimulated by the sanctions of religion. The full emancipation of religion from the corruptions and superstitions which have accumulated by the suppression of reason within its boundaries, would give a new and glorious impulse to those exertions by which man blesses himself in blessing others.

We see also, in this view of morality, what importance attaches to public institutions and laws. How largely and incessantly do they act upon the enjoyments and sufferings of millions! Directly or indirectly, they are ever at work upon our habits, circumstances, prospects, all that is without us, and consequently upon all that is within us, our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes an acquaintance with them indicates the means of benefiting others, sometimes they are an obstruction to the good which we might realize. Their wisdom, their utility, their improvement, their adaptation to the

wants and spirit of the age, are of the utmost importance. Bishop Horsley's definition of a good subject, that 'he has nothing to do with the laws, but to obey them,' is certainly not the description of a good Christian or moral man. It is mere hypocrisy to talk of living for human happiness, and yet profess indifference to the machinery by which so extensively that happiness is created, preserved, impaired or destroyed. One of the first duties of morality assuredly is to watch the tendencies and bearings of these things, and do what we can towards their right direction.

Another most important element is the prevailing tone, temper, or spirit of society. If public law and institution be mighty for good or evil, yet more mighty, in some classes at least, is public or rather social opinion and feeling. There are many, over the formation of whose characters, and the conduct of whose lives, this agency exercises a greater power than any other that can be indicated; more than reflection, more than law, more than religion. To take a glaring instance, because it is on that account an illustrative specimen,—it is this which has upheld, in one class of society, the most absurd and criminal practice of duelling, in direct opposition to the opinions of philosophy, the enactments of law, and the precepts of religion. There are many cases which, though not so conspicuous, yet, reaching lower and spreading wider in society, are con-

tinued by the same power. What an unendurable oddity in any class of society would be a man of thorough Christian sincerity—a man, I mean, who should think freely as well as speak freely! How every little circle of society fixes bounds of opinions and manners! Here the Dissenter is proscribed, there the Unitarian. Most nominal Christians act as if they thought that infidelity was greatly improved by hypocrisy. Enthusiasm, *i. e.*, strong and lofty feeling, is generally considered as throwing a doubt on sanity in the living; in the dead, especially if they died two or three generations back, it becomes a beauty and a splendour. There is much yet to be done to Christianize the world. The apostle John said, 'the whole world lieth in wickedness;' with good allowance for improvement, it yet lieth in a great mass of prejudice and folly.

We see, moreover, the immense importance of education. The young should be educated into Christian morality: they should have its principles firmly implanted in their minds, and be schooled to carry it out into those details which are required by the present condition of existence. Is it not monstrous, that almost the only systematic instruction of this kind is a superficial induction into that very imperfect work, Paley's 'Moral Philosophy,' at our universities? Almost all beyond this is the pulpit, which is much more occupied with faith and doctrines, and a selection of pre-

cepts to make children, servants, and subjects obedient. All the youth of the community should be taught their duties, *i. e.*, their interests; taught how to add to the happiness of the world, *i. e.*, how to secure their own here and hereafter. I say, *all* the youth; for an universal solid education is a national want, and should be ensured for the nation, in spite of individual folly, selfishness, or poverty. Morality rests chiefly on intelligence, and intelligence rests chiefly on education; and the excellence of its quality, and the extent of its enjoyment, are therefore of paramount concern. We have heard of a nation willing to be free; it will be a nobler spectacle to see a nation willing to be wise. God hasten it!

And seeing all this, we see also the importance of our individually entering into these objects; pursuing them for others, but never forgetting to apply them to ourselves. To be the promoters of intelligence, goodness, and improvement, we must ourselves be right earnest for their realization in our own characters. Men said to Christ, 'Physician, heal thyself;' and they will not fail to say it to his followers; and if they did, we should not fail to say it to ourselves. In that analysis of man which indicates our duty to others, there is the exhortation to our duty to ourselves. Do not take this up in a narrow spirit, and say, he has done most for the world's reformation who has reformed

himself; for that absurd expression overlooks the fact, that he who is not solicitous about others, cannot, by any possibility, have taken efficient steps for his own reformation. We should rather apply the language of Christ, 'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again.' Thus shall we enter into the Christian plan; and that is, to enjoy the Christian blessing; to find life, with all its discouragements and evils, yet a good gift of God, preparing us gratefully to receive the better boon of immortality.

SERMON III.

THE PRINCIPLE OF GOODNESS.

(A NEW YEAR'S SERMON TO YOUNG PERSONS.)

MARK X. 17—22.

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, do not commit adultery, do not kill, do not steal, do not bear false witness, defraud not, honour thy father and mother; and he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved; for he had great possessions."

THIS circumstance, which appears from the account in Matthew xix. to be related of a young man, suggests many lessons not inappropriate to the present occasion. I shall only dwell on two or three of the most important of them, and which combine them-

selves into an uniformity of moral tendency and impression. But it may be useful to introduce these, by first glancing at the phraseology and several particulars in the narrative. Of the character and motives of this young man, I shall speak presently. Looking at the external facts, his eagerness after our Lord's instruction is an honourable circumstance. He did not wait for, but sought, the teacher. He came to him, he ran towards him, as if fearful of losing the opportunity. He was not one of those as to whom Wisdom may lift up her voice in the streets, and be unregarded. Pleasant for an instructor is it to have such dispositions to deal with. There are too many who are passive, who wait for truth and knowledge till they come, or who even oppose to them a positive resistance. So acceptable to Providence is even this humblest kind of merit, even the non-opposition to instruction, that the relative positions of teacher and pupil, as they here appear, may to you be considered as reversed; it is only asked of you not to fly from wisdom. The great agencies of divine instruction are ever waiting for you, and as it were running towards you. Coming days and weeks and years hasten to kneel at your feet, as the young man did to Jesus, and ask you what they shall do to ensure your inheritance of eternal life. You have only not to spurn their proffered service, or misdirect their mission. And that great teacher

himself, whom *he* might fear would have passed away before he obtained the answer which he sought as an oracle, is ever waiting to afford *you* enlightenment and guidance; ever waiting in the simplicity of his discourses, the loveliness of his example, and the perfection of his religion; breathing from age to age in every listening ear the words which are spirit, and life, and everlasting truth. They are his principles which I would impress on your minds; 'to-day if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.'

But whether from time and experience, from the living friend or the dead philosopher, from history, science, nature, reason or revelation, seek knowledge; not in a spirit of servility or flattery, but in fair, honest, and manly inquiry. Thus will truth be most propitious to your search. The young man knelt to Christ, and called him, emphatically, *good*; and he therefore received rebuke. This was not so much for the thing itself, as for the adulatory disposition which prompted the gesture and the phraseology. In the East, men testify their respect for superiority, not merely by kneeling, but by prostration; and truly was Christ *a good master*. But he accepted not of incense, which, if appropriate to him in itself, yet arose not from the heart; and still less would he endure an offering for which the altar of Divinity had been despoiled. The reply of our Lord well deserves the attention of modern religionists. It should guard against the common

tendency of advancing in dogma beyond solid evidence and rational conviction, and of stopping short in morality where we have means of further information. 'Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments.' You will, I trust, be untainted by that spurious religion of our times on which this sarcasm falls much more heavily than it did on him to whom it was addressed. They are kindred errors, to raise Christ to an unwarranted deification, and to forget the essential importance of moral works. The one is reckoned sublime theology, and the other an unsaving legality. The profession of the first arrogates exclusively the Christian name; and, without it, the practice of the last is held not to exempt from the pains of eternal torment. I have no wish to excite you to a premature voyage on the troublous ocean of controversy; but I do wish you to mark the spirit of Christ's language, and contrast it with the spirit of much that passes for religion. It is singular that the overstrained compliment of an individual should have led to the record of language so plain and conclusive, and so utterly destructive of the superstitions of a future age. Christ's reply is a demolishing blow at the central dogma of a mystical system, which has so long demanded the prostration of the understanding. When creeds, churches, and liturgies, ask you thus to kneel to Christ, let his ver ring in your ears, 'There is none good but

one, that is, God:' and anticipate that other question, 'Who hath required this at your hands?' We honour Christ when through him we honour his and our God, the only good, infinitely and independently.

Christ only cites the commandments of the second table; those which relate to social, not to religious duties. They are to us a surer test of character. Much as morality has been misunderstood, there is yet far less difficulty in answering the question, What is true morality? than, What is true religion? Besides, the duties to God are instrumental, those to man are final. We cannot benefit him—we may them. 'My righteousness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are on the earth.' Man prays to God in order that he may be good towards men. Devotion is to generate benevolence, as benevolence is to generate happiness. Christ's description of those who are placed on the right hand and the left in the judgment is framed on this principle. The classification is made altogether by moral and social qualities. He taught no worth in religious services, but as they act on character and conduct. This is ground not for their neglect, but for their practice; for which their having such a tendency is the best of all reasons. If, by devotion, purity is imparted to our feelings, fervour to our benevolence, elevation to our aims, strength to our hopes; then, while in one

view it remains subservient to moral qualities, in another it becomes paramount to them, endowing them with nobleness and energy. They want dignity in the mere precept-monger and slavish workmen of a righteousness according to the form and letter of a prescribed rule. Such seems the young man in the text to have been. He boasted readily that all these had he observed from his youth. No doubt he had, so far as external propriety went, in a very decent and exemplary manner. It was not for that, I apprehend, that Jesus loved him. It was rather for his eagerness, his earnestness, and his simplicity. He had not obtruded any boast of his righteousness; he made no affectation of humility; he had come in quest of a better way, though he might not have the strength to tread it. This was enough to make Jesus love a man, in that land of hypocrites and Pharisees. It was some relief from the disgust which the grossness of their manners, and their pretensions to sanctity, must have continually made him feel. His affection was ever ready to overflow, if vice and folly would but allow it. He loved even the world that scorned him, and the country that rejected him, and the fanatics that crucified him. And his heart sprang as with a bound upon the innocence of childhood, and the ingenuousness of youth. Love is easily won by the simplicity that is not *so* simple as to rest in negative qualities of mind and heart, but is in right earnest

for their improvement; and Christ delighted in its indulgence—as every good man does. But the inquirer whom he loved was not to become a beloved disciple. There was a fatal defect in his character. He was brought to the decisive test, and he failed. Christ required him to sell his possessions, take up his cross, and follow him. His heart sunk within him—he departed sad and sorrowing. How different from his approach! He was unveiled to himself; a self-delusion was dispelled; and he could not bear the reality. His satisfaction was gone; and without a renovation of heart, it was gone for ever. And this is the main point in the narrative. This is the moral of the tale, on which I would fix your attention. It may be expressed in three observations on the record, which, if I make them rightly apprehended, will be no unprofitable nor unseasonable study for the youth of this congregation.

1st. This narrative goes to the root of the differences in human character: it guides us to the recognition of a principle of goodness, without which all else is worthless.

It is most desirable that the young should as early as possible arrive at a clear conception of the fact, that there is a moral difference in human character which lies much deeper than any aggregate of external particulars, however numerous or important, can represent. Happiness is the common

object of pursuit; it is 'our being's end and aim;' but directly opposite are the ways in which men strive for its attainment. These imagine they might be happy though all the world were miserable; those must imagine themselves comparatively miserable unless in the prospect of others' happiness. One path leads to the adoration of self in the imagination, the other to its annihilation. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law, without which the law never can be fulfilled, though every precept had its punctual external observance. Whatever seeming similarity there may be, here is the great distinction of good and evil, the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, or whatever other terms we may select to describe those whose characters rest on the opposite bases of selfishness and benevolence. This vital principle of love was what the young man lacked; and, therefore, all the fair-seeming fabric of his pretensions broke down before one plain sentence. That only the agent of others' happiness can achieve his own, is the first truth, and the love of others as ourselves the first feeling, of Christian morality. These should the young acquire, and then they will follow Christ, nor depart from whatever he may enjoin, grieving that they have not virtue for its fulfilment.

Goodness is not a mere collection of isolated particulars, not a bundle of external habits, but an inward principle. And this throws light both on

the manner of its acquirement, and on the stability which may be expected of it under trials. It will not suffice for the formation of a good character that a list of commandments be made out, with the resolution appended to each for its observance. Franklin's art of virtue did not go into the soul of the subject, though useful in its way. His plan was, to rule a little book with lines for the different habits of prudence, order, temperance, &c.; and to mark each day the deficiencies in each particular quality. And, doubtless, many external irregularities may be thus corrected. The plan has its utility, which should not be despised because it is only of a subordinate description. But he would be much mistaken who should think thus to generate in himself the moral image of his Maker, and arrive at the loftiness and loveliness of Christian excellence. That must be done by the intent contemplation of human good, until its realization become an aim, an object, a devotion. This produces not merely the correction of one vice, or the practice of one virtue, but superiority to all vice, and an impulse to universal virtue. Lord Bacon has justly compared the production of goodness in the human soul to the operations of nature as distinguished from the labours of art. The sculptor chisels a block into the complete resemblance of the human form, by the distinct imitation of one feature and limb after another; so that there may

be the face in all its finished beauty, while that part of the stone which is hereafter to represent the body is rude, rough, and shapeless. But not thus does nature form the plant or animal. There is in its germ, or embryo, the principle of all that shall hereafter be developed; and the process is not addition, but expansion. No fabled monster can be more imaginary than a character of which one portion is polished to the purest virtue, while another portion exhibits the grossest deformity of vice, at the same period. Great aberrations there may be—fearful mistakes and illusions; as, on the other hand, there may be splendid appearances, and particular deeds of public praiseworthiness; but I speak of the ultimate point to which in each case the current of life is flowing, and necessarily flowing in different directions. Men start with different answers to the question, What is the great end of existence? and my desire is, that you answer that question rightly, and make distinct to yourselves the purposes of your being. That is far more momentous than the minuteness of preceptive morality. It is the germ of all morals, the life of God in the soul of man, which, as it makes man like God, will ensure all, and a great deal more than all, the obedience to the commandments which he in the text had kept from his youth up. Neglect not minute correction and regulation; know the law, and keep the commandments, and practise

the art of virtue; but in this, as in other arts, the mechanical rules, which are not to be despised, will never atone for the absence of mind and soul, by which alone the valuable purposes of art can be realized.

I said that attention to this principle illustrated not only the formation of goodness, but the reasons of failure or success in trial. This young man who shrunk back from following Christ, had kept all the commandments. John, the beloved disciple, when he was called could have said no more. Yet the one followed Christ rejoicing, bearing his cross; and the other went back sorrowing to his great possessions, which he could not abandon, but which in that moment had clearly abandoned him as a source of enjoyment. That is, there *was* in the one, and there was *not* in the other, a supreme devotion to good, which, though they might be the same externally up to a certain point, when the decisive test was presented, parted them, wide as the poles asunder. It is the principle of goodness, and not the habit of observance, that must avail in new circumstances, emergencies, and trials. Habit is only strong in its own accustomed circle. There is the boundary of its power. Love is as strong in the newest circumstances as in the oldest. It would leave all to follow Christ, though such a thing had neither been done nor heard of previously. It never says, 'I could have borne or relinquished

any thing but that;' when *that* is the very effort which it is called to make, not as an unavailing sacrifice, (for there are no such things in virtue,) but as means to the end which it desires; the end being more desirable, as the means are costlier. Had such been the state of his heart, the young man would have rejoiced in leaving all for Christ. That was the spirit of the true disciples. James said, 'Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations.' Peter, 'We have left all to follow thee.' And Paul 'gloried in tribulation,' thus encountered. And so it is that the furnace which consumes the stubble of mere habitual regularity, makes more splendid the intrinsic worth of the gold of principle.

2nd. The principle of goodness is also that of power, wisdom, pleasure, and immortal happiness. I mean not the *power* which by mere brute force makes one human being the master of another; nor that which employs the advantages derived from the unequal distribution of wealth in society, to make men's dependence for the means of subsistence the instrument of their subjugation to selfish purposes; nor the higher forms which station and legislation confer on some, vesting them with command, more or less limited, and backed by a force more or less difficult to be resisted; nor that mental domination which priests and sectarian leaders affect, corrupting the mind that they may sway the

will: for these are comparatively low or absolutely base, and goodness has no tendency towards their production. They are the prices for which bodily strength, and mental cunning, and accidental station contend—and let them; goodness descends not into their arena. Yet has it power: power such as Christ evinced in this instance, to carry conviction to a man's heart, that his course of life was wrong, and dissolve with a breath the fancied tower of pride and strength in which his soul had dwelt; power, such as he showed, to draw towards him the affection and regard that yield a better fruit than mere obedience, and ensure, not the subservience of will to will, but the coincidence of will with will; the power which penetrates to the very springs of action in ourselves and others; which triumphs in temptations where conquerors are abased, resists where they yield, and prevails where they are baffled. This is the purest and highest kind of power. It is that by which God works his noblest work, making hearts willing. I mean by *wisdom*, not the wisdom of schools or sciences, though goodness quickens intelligence and impels to mental cultivation for its own sake; but moral wisdom, the adjustment of means to the great end of happiness. Vice has always the essential attribute of folly, that willing the end, happiness, it does not also will the means, benevolence. I said *pleasure*, not the greatest immediate amount of gratification to the

senses, or to vanity; but that which longest keeps both mind and body best in tune for all that ministers the sweetest sensations and the fullest satisfaction. And when I say, *immortal happiness*, it is not the fictitious heaven of superstition, the arbitrary recompense which no heart can strongly feel, but that eternal life which begins here and shall continue hereafter; the life of all that is noblest in our natures, capabilities, and relations with the external universe. In this connexion, there is not so much the character of consequence as of identity. The eternal life has commenced in him who has given God his heart by its devotion to the promotion of happiness. According to the old and much perverted metaphor, he is truly 'born again,' born of God, and for eternity. The love which stimulates thought, and prompts all righteous deeds, and diffuses happy influences, and stands the severest trials, (making them often not trials, where to others they are fatal temptations,) and ever brightens and strengthens, receiving back the bliss it creates around, this, and this only, is everlasting life.

It was Christ's love that so often disarmed the misled and frantic multitude, that shielded him so long against the fierce vindictiveness of the authorities, that drew around him a devoted band of followers, renouncing all things; and of peasants and fishermen made moral heroes and religious sages, apostles, martyrs, the world's instructors and

examples. It was the in-dwelling in their hearts of this self-same principle, that made their characters as disciples correspond with his character as their master; that expanded to his teachings their untutored minds; that obliterated their prejudices, and purified their desires, and transformed them into his glorious image. This made them say so confidently of their future progress, 'we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.' And this is the Christian principle, which, whenever it can be deeply rooted in young hearts, shall make the tree of life grow on earth as in the Paradise of God, and herald the true millennium, the real reign of Christ.

3rd. The manifestation, of the principle of goodness must always be modified by the state of society in which we live.

As the principle is everlasting, so will be its most elementary manifestations. And these constitute so much of morality as is properly called everlasting. Amongst the most obvious of these are the Jewish commandments cited in the text. Such things as fraud and falsehood, rapine and murder, and want of due respect and gratitude to parents, ever have been, and ever must be, sins. But these, as we have already seen, are but a poor husk and shell of righteousness, which he may have, who, even while Christ loves him, can yet turn back to dwell with Mammon. As virtue is the means of happiness, and as society with all its institutions and

diversities of civilization and manners, must largely modify the way in which here we can make either ourselves or others happy, there must needs be a corresponding modification of what constitutes virtue. That which was the test of goodness to the young man in the text would now but be the demonstration of folly. 'Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor.' That would have been his noblest way of promoting human happiness, his shrinking from which showed that he was devoid of the principle of goodness; but the man who should do this now would do only mischief to all parties. He would not secure any real advantage to the poor, he would exercise no moral power over the wealthy, he would only attract the pity or the derision of the entire community. He who loves the poor, will now find better ways of serving them and mankind. By promoting their education, their industry, their personal prudence, and their social rights, he will be following Christ in what the state of society makes the path of usefulness. This now is virtue. To make a literal observance of Christ's direction, virtue, we must turn the world back again, to before the destruction of Jerusalem, and the promulgation of Christianity. The different condition of families,—for households without slaves and a despotic master, are a novelty since those days; the different condition of political society,—for that so many of the people should have a portion

in the solemn responsibilities and wide influences of legislation, by representative government, is a novelty since those days; the very different state of mankind as to knowledge, for the means of its rapid diffusion, and of the discussion of all its facts and principles, *i. e.*, the consequences of the invention of printing, is another novelty since those days; these are differences which make novelties also in the list of those virtues and vices which powerfully bear upon human happiness or misery. They affect our opinions and our modes of disseminating them, our actions and their consequences. Free inquiry, the great theological virtue of these times, could have little scope, when the divine miracle was seen, and the divine messenger was heard. Patriotism could do little more than sometimes draw the sword for national independence. The duty of reading was a brief duty when the possession of a manuscript was almost that of a little fortune. Man can now do nothing for his fellow-creatures in some cases, where then he might have benefited them; much, in many cases where then he could do but little; and perhaps, much more in some, where then he could have done nothing at all. Fully to develope this, would be to preach an entire system of moral philosophy, of which, after all, every reflecting individual would perceive some modifications suggested by his own individual circumstances. I have accomplished my purpose, if I have only

stimulated your minds to cultivate the principle of goodness, and study its details, ever keeping in view their object,—the production of human happiness. For what is the summary of the whole matter? "'The first and great commandment is, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, thy mind and strength.' And the second is like unto it, 'Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.' On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" and on these also depend individual salvation and social usefulness. They are the foundation of earth's improvement and heaven's blessedness.

SERMON IV.

THE LAW OF THE LORD.

PSALM xix. 7.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."

By the 'law of the Lord,' in the Old Testament, and by similar expressions, as his 'statutes, precepts, testimonies,' &c., we are usually to understand the institutions of the Mosaic dispensation. These were to the Jews a divine code; complete in its requirements and sanctions; commanding some actions, prohibiting others, and annexing appropriate rewards and penalties. These terms did not designate their Scriptures as a whole; they did not ascribe either inspiration or obligation to any of them; but simply to those legislative enactments of which a certain portion of their Scriptures constituted the authentic record. The rest was history, exhortation, poetry, or prophecy; but this was *the law*, the will of God, the law of the Lord. It is

this which David compares with the laws of God in nature; the principles according to which the sun shines by day, the moon rules by night, and the stars revolve in their courses. He finds in it similar marks of wisdom, power, and benevolence. He traces them to the same divine Author. He beholds them all illustrating, he hears them all proclaiming, the glory of God; and looking yet further, he marks their tendency to the same end, their exertion of a like exalting influence upon the mind and heart of man. In the spirit of that clear philosophy, which is the offspring of a pure theology, he saw that the material universe, in all its beauty and glory, only exists for the sake of its effect upon intelligent beings. Matter in all its forms of beauty and of brightness, and motion in all its harmonies, exist for the sake of mind; to that they 'utter speech,' for that they 'show forth knowledge.' And so he perceived that the laws given by Moses had an ulterior object far higher than that of merely enforcing certain ceremonies, and preventing others from being performed: he saw that they had a tendency to affect human character, that they 'converted the soul,' *i. e.*, changed, transformed, and thereby elevated the life of man. And in this, which many Jews of a long subsequent age, and full of fiery zeal for their ritual, did not perceive, he contemplated the source of the worth and perfection of that code. He thus entered into the spirit of the divine plan;

he had an insight into the scheme of Providence and revelation, which those who only looked to the law *as law*, with no consideration of any thing but the precept and the penalty, could never attain. He gloried in its tendency to create character—in its influence on the mind—in its converting the soul.

This expression, then, belonged properly to the Jewish peculiarity. They had, what it properly designates, a code of specific directions for conduct. As used by the Psalmist, we need have no difficulty in knowing at once and distinctly what it means. Modern Christians not only extend its meaning, but employ it very confusedly. I do not object to its meaning being extended, but to its being extended without propriety of application, or distinctness of reference. Let it be used in another meaning; but let it be understood in what meaning it *is* used. Some talk of a law which Christ lived and died to satisfy; which requires perfect righteousness of imperfect man, under the penalty of infinite torment for that which he cannot avoid. I know of no such law. Who can tell when or where it was promulgated? Some call the ten commandments God's law. They are the summary, the essence of the national law of the Jews. He who obeys one of them is promised long life in Canaan. That is enough to show the time and space within which they were God's law. Others apply the phrase to the precepts of the New Testament. But many of

these were evidently local and temporary. We must always exercise our reason upon them to discover which were so, or the contrary. That is inconsistent with the character of law, properly so called, which is to define and enjoin so as to leave nothing to individual interpretation and volition. The Gospel, instead of being a particular directory, guides us to moral principles. Accordingly, one Apostle, calling it a law, does so in what else would be a paradox and absurdity, for he calls it a 'perfect law of liberty,' whereas liberty ends where law begins. And another, the Apostle John, puts the two things in antithetical opposition, 'the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.'

The exposure of this confusion of language is of some importance. The great evil flowing from it is, that men are left without any clear, distinct, systematic notion of what constitutes morality. They may be very conscientious, but conscience is only valuable in proportion as it is well-informed. Very foolish things, and very wicked things, are often done very conscientiously. 'I cannot help thinking,' some one may say, 'that I am quite safe, so long as I am guided by the Scriptures;' and I reply, 'So you are:' for if you be guided by the Christian Scriptures you will admit the summary of duty to be, 'Love your neighbour as yourself;' and if you do that, you will deem it incumbent on

you to work out this principle into all the details which flow from it in our present state of social existence. It is not enough that you are affectionate and kind-hearted towards your neighbour; that you will not personally inflict injury, but do readily every friendly office; all this may be, and yet your love may only be like that of the child to the child, in well-meaning ignorance proffering a gratification which injures the health both of the giver and the receiver. Such is not Christian benevolence, nor therefore Christian duty or morality, or the law of the God of Christianity. The promotion of our own and others' happiness is a work of intelligence, and not a blind instinct, or ignorant good nature. We must study the principle in the details to which it is applicable. It is curious that, in a country which has been professedly Christian for ages, and where there are such ample foundations for the training of able and learned men, and such large rewards for them, and such classic and literary seclusions for their pursuits, that this task should have been most efficiently performed by one who is understood to have been, to a certain extent at least, an unbeliever. But so it is; and with all our schools and professors, the late Mr. Bentham was the ablest expositor of what is really Christian morality, the true law of the Lord as to social duty, that our country or the world has yet produced. The whole of his writings are proofs and illustrations

of the position that we shall find our own greatest happiness in the promotion of the greatest happiness of others. That is the rationale of 'loving our neighbour as ourself.' It is loving him to some good purpose—and ourselves too. Had Christian divines done this, they would have been better employed than in most of their controversies and commentaries. That their labours have taken a different direction shows the need of another and greater reformation than any which has yet been achieved. They would have been far better expositors of the law of the Lord: they would not have, practically, held it up to animadversion and ridicule as multifarious, imperfect yet redundant, pliable, inconsistent, arbitrary, and with all the inconveniences of the voluminous statute book of a nation, ceaselessly legislating upon particulars. They would not have ever re-acted the scene of the plain of Shinar, and been building their Babel tower into the clouds only to end in a confusion of tongues. For to what does the notion of a textual directory of duty, a law of the Lord scattered over the Scriptures in detached sentences, bring us? With a little ingenuity of interpretation, may not a man find a directive text for almost every thing he likes, and a prohibitory text for almost every thing he dislikes? Nor is the evil always in this direction, but sometimes in its very opposite. There is a fearful and perhaps morbid tenderness of conscience which is

apprehensive that an action may be sinful, simply because it is pleasurable, and which disposes to think that another may be obligatory, merely because it is painful, and involves some sacrifice. Persons of this temperament will also be sure to find what they seek. We may feel more respect for their mistake than for that of the others; and yet I scarcely know why we should respect a mistake which, by its perfectly needless and gratuitous production of evil, (for the negation of enjoyment and the causing of sacrifice and pain are evil,) is directly opposed to the will of God, and the spirit of Christianity. They may commit sin through the fear of sin, but it is sin nevertheless. There are those who believe that if, in any food, blood is eaten, the law of the Lord is broken; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There are those who, in addition to the common practice of assembling on *the Lord's day*, the first day of the week, also remember the seventh day to keep it holy, separate from all secular avocations; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There have been those who maimed themselves on a religious ground, to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There are those who, even though to protect society from the

most atrocious criminality being let loose upon it with impunity, will 'swear not at all;' and if particular precept, instead of general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. And so, two of the most blessed events of later ages, the emancipation of America, and the reform of Britain, might have been stopped, and there were conscientious men who would have stopped them, the one by 'honour the king,' and the other, by 'meddle not with them that are given to change.' Now all these, I apprehend, are, to say the least, cases in which it would be difficult to dislodge a verbally preceptive conscience from the ground it occupied, and the fortress in which it had intrenched itself. If the aggregate of Scripture precept, in its literal interpretation, be the law of the Lord, why the letter of the law does appear to be in favour of those whom we have described. But if an appeal be made from the letter to the spirit, that comes to the very point for which I am contending; for the spirit of Christian morality is the principle of utility, or the production of what will be ultimately the greatest amount of happiness, carried out into all its present bearings and applications, by a rational deduction and calculation of consequences. Now here we come to something tangible. The meaning of a phrase may be debated for ever; but the influence of an action on the individual and society may be so estimated, that the process approaches to com-

plete exhaustion of the subject, and consequently the result to strict demonstration of the duty. And then the direction to 'love our neighbour as ourselves,' is text and precept enough for all. It includes, enforces, and sanctions every thing which we ought to do, and prohibits the reverse. And so duty in the question of eating blood is decided, not by the Hebrew terms of the covenant with Noah, nor by the Greek of the Jerusalem recommendation to the Gentiles, but by the wholesomeness and humanity of the practice. And that of a sabbath is rested, not on a law of Moses for Israel, but on the utility of a weekly recurring day of rest, and instruction and social worship. And in taking or refusing a judicial oath, conscience has to ascertain the balance of evil to society, in conforming with what is not a good way of getting at truth, or letting the culprit escape. And bodily mortifications will only be practised when their beneficial results on health, mind, or character, can be indicated. And nations struggling for political existence will be rightly assured that they are discharging a public duty because they are promoting a public good. We discover God's law of duty when we ascertain the means which promote his end of happiness. And this is why particular precepts can never constitute everlasting morality. In the wonderful changes of human society, the means, that is, the particular actions, vary by which

social and individual happiness is advanced. Some things must ever be the same; in the rudest and most civilized states of life; in the simplest and most complicated relations—as, for instance, temperance and veracity; but beyond the sphere of the most elementary duties, new ones are continually rising, and old ones becoming obsolete. In the Old Testament, there are few actions so frequently denounced as the removing of landmarks. In the New, we read nothing about such a sin. The condition of Judea as to the division of the land had materially altered. The two great alterations accomplished by Christianity in the domestic life of antiquity, the abolition of polygamy and that of household slavery, were not accomplished by direct precept. They are nowhere distinctly prohibited; but they were put down by the law of the Lord as seen in the application of the doctrine of man's fraternity to the state of society. The recognized political existence of the great mass of the people gives rise to a whole train of duties, creates virtues and vices, which could have no place in the moral philosophy of a former age. Thus the right of private judgment, and the obligation of free inquiry, so important now in religion, were unmeaning words to those who heard prophecies announced, and saw miracles performed. The author of the Essay 'On the Pursuit of Truth' introduces his work with some admirable observations on this topic. 'In

the progress of society, remarkable changes inevitably take place in moral sentiment. Actions formerly regarded as of trivial moment grow into importance; qualities at one time extolled sink into dubious virtues or even positive vices; new duties are evolved from the novel situations in which men are placed, and the code of morality is amplified with rules which would have been unintelligible at the previous period, because the circumstances to which they are applicable had not then arisen. Such are all rules relating to the conduct of man in the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge. So long as science had no existence, as mankind were solely occupied in providing for their physical wants, or were continually engaged in the rougher work of mutual depredation and hostility, the pursuit of knowledge as a distinct object could not have place, and consequently the virtues and vices connected with it were unknown. In our days, a different posture of affairs presents itself. The acquisition of knowledge has become an object of immense interest and importance. The welfare of society in a thousand ways is deeply implicated in the rectification of error and the discovery of truth. Hence new relations arise, new obligations are constituted, a career is opened in which man may display numerous virtues and vices, in which there are various things to shun and to perform, and in which, therefore, we are called to discriminate and to select.'

What, then, is the law of the Lord, the rule of conscience, the path of duty, the test of virtue, the condition of reward? Nature, reason, and revelation, all guide us to the same answer. It is that connexion of cause and effect which the Divine will has established in matter, mind and morals, by our acquaintance with which we become qualified to use the best means for the attainment of the happiness which is the end and aim of our being. As we become more and more acquainted with this, we increasingly perceive that it is perfect, converting the soul, raising the life by conversions, changes, to a higher and still higher sphere of blissful existence.

In material or physical existence, 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' The properties of bodies, the principles of motion, chemical affinities, the results of combinations and of organization; all the laws which natural science has discovered, and goes on to discover, are the divine will. They are a law of the Lord which it concerns man to know, because, whenever he attempts any thing in opposition to it, he is sure to produce suffering. Some acquaintance with this is essential to man's existence, even in the lowest stage of society, in savage life. Comforts multiply in proportion as these laws are known; they are the foundation of the 'arts that make it life to live.' They have led to the discovery of means for mitigating and heal-

ing diseases that once were inevitably mortal; and have lengthened the average duration, in many countries, of human life. They afford the mechanical agencies by which we traverse space, in spite of distance, and preserve knowledge in spite of time; and they convert the soul from something little above brute instinct, into a spirit of rationality and philosophy, looking before and after, and using the ample materials which God has scattered around it for those purposes of comfort and reflection, of devotion and enjoyment, for which he provided them.

In intellectual existence, 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' The mind is built up by influences which best provide for its gradual attainment of comprehensiveness, dignity, and power. The association of ideas, the source of our faculties, knowledge, and convictions, must tend to its own correction, and ultimate perfection. To know any thing of the will of God, we must know something of the mind of man. A growing acquaintance with its laws has rectified many pernicious mistakes, and will rectify more. It is beginning to explode that most injurious dogma of the voluntary nature of belief, which has been the cause of so many imputations of vice, and assumptions of privilege, of the agonies of despair, and the atrocities of persecution. If we knew the law of the Lord, in the regulation of mind, we should not offer motives to the will in

order to influence the conclusions of the understanding. We should also advance more rapidly in the improvement of education and of legislation. A sound mental philosophy, generally understood, would destroy religious bigotry; would deliver the soul from a host of vain regrets and vain expectations; would enable us to show our love to our neighbour in the way that would most deeply penetrate into his heart and soul; and would guide to the formation of purer and nobler characters in the rising generation than the world has yet produced. Christ's power was that 'he knew what was in man.' Self-knowledge is self-veneration, because it is the perception of a power to bless, and of the mode of its exercise.

In social being, 'the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul.' Every one, on looking within, must feel that it is the will of God that he should aim at his own happiness. But the more observantly we look around, the more must we be impressed with the conviction, that our own happiness is the most enhanced by the largest promotion of the happiness of others. Exclusive selfishness leads unfailingly to suffering. What is the progress of society, but in succession to take one and another class of human beings into its account, who before were trodden down and disregarded, and thereby to augment the happiness of the whole? Here is the source of a growing happiness, and, therefore, it is a

growing righteousness or virtue in individuals. Feudal barons were not so happy in the despotic command of their retainers as the chosen leaders of intelligent and free men in their patriotic struggles. The proprietors of men were not so happy in the relation of owner and slave, as the wealthy are now in that of master and servant, a voluntary connexion for mutual advantage. Indians are not so happy in compelling their women to ceaseless drudgery, as were they to treat them like equal companions. Parents were not so happy in the ancient unquestioned power of life and death over their offspring as Christian fathers and mothers with all their responsibilities. That in each case the class which is raised becomes happier, nobody can doubt; but a moment's reflection will show that what was the privileged class becomes all the happier by the progress from a system of gross selfishness towards one of benevolence and equality. And we also see that this is the natural progress of things—Beautiful law! which thus refines self-love into social, making it the means of a higher enjoyment than selfishness ever conceived—'perfect, converting the soul!'

And so it is in religion, which is not a set of prescribed, unmeaning, arbitrary forms, but a rational homage to our Maker, rendered as we find it most conducive to our spiritual good. The law of God as to human destiny is, that we are regenerated by

death to immortality. And this converts the soul; changes it to purer notions of its interest and a loftier sense of its dignity; and gives a stronger impulse to its beneficent energy. This completes, perfects, and crowns all the rest—this sheds the last and strongest light on the actions which must be the means of ultimate happiness; and which, therefore, are the law of the Lord for our conduct here. It shows us, together with, and above the rest, how by knowledge, truthfulness, purity, love, and energy, we shall find for our souls, peace and rest, bliss and glory. May it ever inspire our grateful adoration of Him, who in the character of the supreme legislator, so beautifully displays himself as the universal Father! Amen.

SERMON V.

WISDOM AND FOLLY.

ECCLESIASTES vi. 8.

"For what hath the wise more than the fool?"

WHY, it appears by the very question, put as it is by the writer, in gloom and bitterness of spirit, that he hath at least this more—melancholy pre-eminence though it be—that he sorrows with a deeper sorrow, regrets with a keener anguish, has a larger capacity of suffering, and, gazing over the wider regions of his mental vision, may behold multiplied forms of evil, and behold them with an intenser pang. No fool, no unthinking creature of this world, ever felt the doubtings and the dark despondings of the writer of this book, the gifted King of Israel, whose name the child is taught to lisp as that of the wisest man; and whose fame the East has preserved in the wildness of its traditions, and the West cherishes by the veneration of his writings.

This book, which records the principles in which at length he rested, and intimates the peace which at length he attained, records also his mental aberrations, conflicts, and sufferings; and they bear their proportion to the multitude of his acquirements, the extent of his comprehension, the energy of his will, and the depth of his emotions. Here, then, is the question answered; answered at first in a way that seems to mock the questioner, and applaud the folly of the fool, and shame the wisdom of the wise; but which ultimately, and by consequence, reverses the primary impression, and reconciles us to the constitution of nature, the dispensations of Providence, and the destiny of man. In certain states or circumstances of existence the inevitable reply is, that the wise hath more, far more suffering than the fool; but a superior suffering implies a larger capacity; and a larger capacity implies a higher aggregate of enjoyment, a nobler kind and amount of happiness. If the capacity be an inference from the suffering, the happiness becomes in turn an inference from the capacity. If the lamentation be justly applied to Christ, 'Come and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow;' it was precisely for the same reason that, compared with his glory, all other loses its lustre 'by reason of the glory that excelleth.' A less elevated mind than his could not have been so agonized; the very acuteness of his sufferings demonstrated the

number and power of the qualities in him which are the materials and the architects of ultimate felicity. So, in the gradations of animal nature, the means by which the superior classes can compass and enjoy so much more than the inferior, are the very apparatus by which suffering is sometimes inflicted, of which those inferior natures can have no conception. Every development of the nervous system might be rendered subservient to the illustration of this fact. That delicate organ, the eye—of how much pain to body and to mind is it the agency! but the very pain which demonstrates its existence, demonstrates the possession of a faculty which ministers most largely to enjoyment. And this is exactly the reasoning which I apply to the question in the text as put by Solomon. The gloomiest portions of the book of Ecclesiastes show faculties which must, ultimately, render their possessor a more dignified and happy being than those are who are devoid of such faculties. And thus the question, put with a sneer of bitterness, is answered with a benediction.

Before I go further into this question, let me preclude, if possible, misconception as to the subjects and persons of whom I speak. There are people to whom the word 'wise' brings associations neither very distinct nor very pleasant; who speak of the wise as a select and supercilious class, from which they, by no fault of their own, and with no loss on

their own part, are excluded; and whose supposed scorn they accordingly retort with scorn; or whose attainments and enjoyments, whatever they may be, they regard as altogether foreign from their own proper business. What they call wisdom is something which they think God and Providence meant they should do without, and they think that they can do very well without it. Now here is a great mistake. Of any one present, I should not hesitate to say that, if he be not wise, nor becoming so, it implies both culpability and calamity. There is no reason, in the nature of things, why the wise should be the few and not the many. There is no bar to the attainment of moral wisdom, in lowly birth, or the want of a learned education, or poverty of circumstances, or the necessity of daily and even laborious occupation: all these difficulties are continually overcome where there is the disposition to maintain with them an honest, determined, and persevering struggle. And as to affecting to despise wisdom, the Christian who does that, does at the same time, though, perhaps, unthinkingly and unknowingly, affect to despise the religion which he means to profess, and the heaven which he hopes to enjoy. The very object of divine revelation is to make men wise—to make all men wise —to make them wise unto salvation. It was kindled up as a light in a dark place, but that was in order to make the darkness light; it aimed at,

not a partial exhibition, but an universal transformation. As far as it succeeded, it presumed that this was done. Paul spoke, not to a class, but to all the members of all the churches, when he said, 'I speak as unto wise men, judge ye what I say.' Heaven is a condition, of which intellectual progression is one of the elements. The fool who despises the wise, despises that which God promises he himself shall become hereafter, if he attain to Christian blessedness. That is one of the gradations of his ascent, in the interminable elevation of futurity. The old law is not at all superseded by the new, where it says, 'Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding.' Nay, this is the pervading spirit of the new and final dispensation. He so far fails of being a good Christian who does not, to the best of his means, strive most earnestly to enrich his mind with knowledge and truth, and exercise his judgment into quickness, clearness, and soundness. They are 'men of God, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.' And such the New Testament exhorts all to become.

The best definition of wisdom is that, which declares it to consist in the adaptation of means to ends: and as the ultimate object of rational existence is the highest kind and longest duration of happiness, this includes theology and morals in their bearings on time and eternity, while it also applies

to the most comparatively unimportant and common particulars of every-day existence. Even the meanest trifle will afford an answer of advantage to the question, 'What hath the wise more than the fool?'

He hath more in every thing wherein he is wise; if wise in them, he hath more in the common occupations and business of life. In the bestowment, and in the loss of wealth, there are sometimes occurrences which (as to the individual) may, perhaps, be allowed to claim the terms arbitrary and accidental. They are the exceptions and not the rule. There is a coherence of cause and effect, a connexion of means and ends in success here, as in everything else; a coherence of connexion as regular, though not as obvious, as in the experiments of the philosopher, or the operations of material nature. I mean no censure,—it may be sometimes moral praise,—when I say that the want of success in life is largely owing to mental inaptitude. There is somewhere or other a wrong calculation. 'Who could have foreseen that?' is an apology for failure, which will not frequently come from a wise man's mouth. *He* will ascertain where that which he can contribute to the common stock of human comfort is most in demand—and that will be his market. *He* will anticipate, before he feels them to his ruin, the influences of events and changes on different occupations. *He* will not live upon expedients which only increase involvement till extrication

is impossible. *He* will not go on relying on the doctrine of chances against the fair calculation of probabilities. The motto of his life will not be taken from the chapter of accidents. He will soberly and accurately balance the risks of commerce against its prizes. And thus will worldly wisdom ensure worldly thriving. The acute observer of such a man will feel confident of his success, even amid his heaviest losses, while he will predict the failure of the fool when surrounded by his golden gains.

Why, then, are not the wisest men the richest? Because of another advantage which wisdom has over folly; the keeping in view that the end of those means is itself but the means to a much more important end, the largest measure of earthly enjoyment. There are many who look no farther than this world, and yet are far from making the most of this world. The wise have thus much more than the fool, that they do not spend their labour for that which profiteth not; that which does not conduct them to, or even which interferes with, their comfort and pleasure. There is a point beyond which no personal advantage of any kind whatever can be conferred by wealth. There is another point far before that, beyond which the pursuit, and even the attention required by the large possession of wealth, is inconsistent with that cultivation of the intellect, the imagination, the taste, and the

various principles, individual and social, of present enjoyment, by whose development its largest amount is secured. There wisdom stops; even if it looks not further than this world. Something better is achieved for mortal man than the low gratifications of sensualism, avarice, or ostentation. How rare is this moderation—this combination of pecuniary success, with the purer and better sources of pleasure that life affords! How many more gain or inherit the means than know how to render them most available to the end, the only rational end for which they can deserve attention, time, and toil.

And there may be comparative folly even when this point is gained. He who aims only and solely at his own immediate enjoyment is sure not to realize the largest measure of that. There will still be a want, of which wisdom will indicate the nature and the remedy. The sympathetic are so complicated with the selfish principles in our constitution, that he only who lives for others, lives most and best for himself. The satisfaction of benevolence is as much above that of taste and intellect, as that is above the ordinary gratification of the senses. By enlarging the circle of our sympathies and interests, there is an ampler flow of happiness from its circumference of philanthropy or patriotism to its centre of individual feeling. If the highest degree of personal good be the end, wisdom dictates the most efficient means in public spirit, public exer-

tion, public beneficence. We lighten our own burden when we bear the burdens of others. Duty, virtue, morality, benevolence, or by whatever name we call thinking and acting for social good, is only neglected by a blind selfishness, not an enlightened selfishness; and its employment, with the personal complacency and satisfaction thence arising, is one thing which the wise hath more than the fool.

We ascend another step. We suppose two men alike convinced that virtue or duty is involved in their own greatest happiness. It is by another and yet higher application of wisdom, that this conviction is carried out into successful effect. In no particular is the superiority of the wise over the fool more apparent than in the discharge of duty, the practice of virtue, the exercise of benevolence. The enemies of the theological merit of good works have said, that 'hell is paved with good intentions.' Certainly a huge pile of misery on earth has been built up by good intentions, labouring most diligently, but without wisdom for their presiding architect. Good intention often sacrifices the real, solid, permanent welfare of children, their education, and their future character, to the dictates of fashion, or the vanities of station. Good intention has often desired to keep the people ignorant, or stint their knowledge, that they may thereby be more orderly and religious. Good intention spends often more on the most feeble and obsolete apparatus of instruction,

than would put in action the best machinery. Good intention, by its mistaken charities, makes, to some, labour less profitable than mendicity, and extinguishes the prudence and self-reliance that it is the noblest charity to cherish. Good intention supports the monopolies and restrictions which maintain hundreds, overlooking the remoter, but not less certain consequence, that they reduce the thousands to starvation. This 'hath the wise more than the fool,' the most virtuous fool, that when he means to do good, he does good—the very difference between Saul the persecutor for God's glory, and Paul the Apostle for men's salvation.

There is yet another and a last gradation. Man is made not only to live, but to die; not only for this world, but also for the world to come; not only for time, but for eternity. And Providence has established the same connexion between the religious and the moral principle, as exists between the moral and the prudential. The measure of the happiness of life cannot be filled to the brim, unless there flow in upon it anticipations of the happiness of immortality. He is not wise for the present, who allows not futurity to enter into his calculation. He cannot, as we have already seen, attain the best and purest earthly happiness without philanthropy; and it is religion which gives philanthropy its strongest motives, and its widest sphere, and its brightest hopes. The wise man, in his benevolent

efforts, will perceive this; he will be urged towards the practical faith of a God, of a Providence, of an hereafter. That faith will complete the elevation of his soul, from the lowest selfishness to the highest benevolence. It will inspire his heart with strength, when the fool is fainting who hath said in *his* heart, that 'there is no God.' There is a radical imperfection in our views of society, of virtue, of happiness, unless they include the ideas of religion; they alone can give symmetry and completeness to the universal plan, and harmonize the feelings of the individual with his relation to the general system. But religion itself requires wisdom for the perception of its grandeur, the direction of its impulses, and the realization of its blessings. The happiness of another world is the end; and the formation of a character fitted for the enjoyment of that happiness, the appropriate means. The contented ignorance, the heartless formality, the base servility, the complacent bigotry, the cold indifference, the unexceptionable uselessness, in which men think to go to heaven, as they call it, because here they abstained from whatever was offensive to common opinion, and believed as their priest, church, or catechism taught, and lived very regular and respectable lives, are but in the same condition of contrast with real wisdom that we have been tracing all through. They hope for heaven, as the fool hopes for wealth, by a fortuitous and arbitrary

conjunction; and not in the fixed course of cause and effect. They do not use the means of future happiness, the only means which can avail, however much they may have of future existence. Those who shall be like Christ hereafter must be the sons of God now. The wise make a good use of time; therefore, it will be a blessing to them to be gifted with eternity. The wise cultivate the enjoyment of whatever there is of beauty, and harmony, and sublimity here; therefore, it will be a blessing to them to live in a world, or freely to range all worlds, where the loveliest dreams of imagination will be realized, and nature assume far nobler forms at the bidding of Him who is the first good, first perfect, and first fair. The wise identify themselves with their fellow-creatures, and mourn with the mourner, and rejoice with the joyous; and have a voice for truth, and a heart for humanity, and energy and effort for improvement; and, therefore, it will be a blessing to them to join the assembly of the just, and become ministering spirits of the God of love, and do in heaven the will which, as far as they could, was done by them on earth. The wise have studied the character and attributes of the infinite God, and endeavoured to imbibe his spirit, and bear his moral likeness, and, therefore, it will be a blessing to them, when 'they shall see his face,' and 'his name shall be in their foreheads,' and they shall surround his eternal throne. But what is heaven to

him who has not thus, by its previous influences, been fashioned for its possession? What will his unquestioning faith, but a faith as unfelt as undoubted; what will his unquestioned conduct, but a conduct as devoid of the heart and soul of goodness, as it is free from the world's imputation—what will these avail him there? He may not be the subject of suffering; but what can he know and taste of the higher kinds of spiritual enjoyment? He has not prepared himself for the true heaven of the Gospel; he has been expecting some external, and arbitrary, and positive sort of reward; and it is to him like the gift of a rich and ample library to a man who cannot read; or of Grecian statues and Italian paintings to one who has no taste for, or perception of, the beauties of form and colour, grace in the execution, or genius in the design. Why, let a man contemplate even a brief residence in a foreign land, and he endeavours to make some previous acquirement which may increase his pleasure therein; he trains himself into some previous fitness. Let him expect the possession of some station of emolument or influence, and he does something to qualify himself the more fully to inherit its advantages or the more ably to employ its powers; and yet the fool in religion thinks to go to glory without those qualities of head, heart, and character; the piety and purity, and dignity and beneficence, which alone are fitness for heaven—which are an

anticipated heaven while we are on earth, and without which there would be no heaven to all eternity. This 'hath the wise more than the fool;' in religion as in all things else, that he adapts the means to the end; prepares himself for the inheritance which is prepared for him, dies daily to live eternally, and retires from his good and faithful service, to enter into the everlasting joy of his approving Lord.

The question is answered, then;—answered by Providence itself in a connected series of lessons, the instruction of which it is man's best wisdom to imbibe. Without common prudence, foresight, skill and industry, man cannot reasonably expect to gain wealth and competence: without the cultivation of intellect and taste, wealth cannot give more than a gross, unsatisfactory, and little better than animal enjoyment: without moral qualities, sympathies, social interests and efforts, the pleasures of intellect and fancy will satiate and pall: without reflection, judgment, solid principles rightly applied, those sympathies and interests will often run to waste and turn to bitterness; and that reflection and these principles conduct to pure religion for their completion, their strength, their crown; religion, which holds out the highest object and requires the noblest means: the one, happiness, infinite, and everlasting; the other, character, purified and elevated towards the utmost perfection of humanity.

There may be dejection in the wise man's course; but though cast down, he is not forsaken. Black clouds may lower over the scene, but upon them is the rainbow, and after them comes a brighter sunshine. With all his aberrations and depression, his life is still a progression; and so is his immortality. In some disappointed mood he may ask, 'What hath the wise more than the fool?' But his calmer meditation on the course of his existence will be like the vision of Jacob; it will be as a ladder, set up on earth, but its top reaching unto heaven. The patriarch was sleeping at its foot—sleeping a brief time, while his frame was weary and his vision was blissful; but early in the morning he rose, the strength of his body and the piety of his heart alike invigorated; offered his vows to God, and went forwards on his way, trusting and rejoicing.

SERMON VI.

HUMAN BROTHERHOOD.

Acts xvii. 26.

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men."

Had the fact that Paul preached at Athens been mentioned without particulars, how great would have been our curiosity to know how *he* conducted himself who eminently ranks as a philosopher among the apostles, when he stood alone, an apostle among philosophers! This was the noblest arena on which he had ever struggled; he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, but at Athens he contended with the master spirits of mankind. He was at once in the very palace of intellect, and the sanctuary of idolatry. All that his writings and recorded actions have unfolded of his character rush upon our minds, and deepen our interest, and exalt our expectations, as we behold him, impelled by the fervour of zeal, and armed only in the sim-

plicity of truth, advancing to glorify Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord of faith, in the awful presence of this world's wisdom. Well did he acquit himself, in a speech where reason lays the broad basis of a spiritual theism, and revelation rears the lofty structure of judgment and immortality. He spoke, as apostle should speak at Athens, in language worthy of himself, and his illustrious character, and heavenly commission;—worthy of the dignified auditory before which he pleaded; worthy of diffusion and transmission to remotest countries and ages, for reverential study; and worthy to be the shrine of those fundamental and everlasting principles which constitute religious truth, and are Christianity. Nor is it to him alone that our interest clings; for, from the dawn of intellect and freedom, has Greece been a watch-word in the earth. There rose the social spirit, to soften and refine her chosen race, and shelter, as in a nest, her gentleness from the rushing storm of barbarism—there liberty first built her mountain throne, first called the waves her own, and shouted across them a proud defiance to despotism's banded myriads: there the arts and graces danced around humanity, and stored man's home with comforts, and strewed his path with roses, and bound his brows with myrtle, and fashioned for him the breathing statue, and summoned him to temples of snowy marble, and charmed his senses with all forms

of elegance, and threw over his final sleep their veil of loveliness: there sprung poetry, like their own fabled goddess, mature at once, from the teeming intellect, girt with the arms and armour that defy the assaults of time, and subdue the heart of man: there matchless orators gave the world a model of perfect eloquence, the soul the instrument on which they played, and every passion of our nature but a tone which the master's touch called forth at pleasure: there lived and taught the philosophers of bower and porch, of pride and pleasure, of deep speculation and of useful action, who developed all the acuteness and refinement, and excursiveness, and energy of mind, and were the glory of their country, when their country was the glory of the earth.

But although such associations as these work powerfully on our feelings as we turn to the page where what is most brilliant in profane and important in sacred history come in contact, we must remember that Athens appeared to the apostle under a very different aspect. There are sufficient indications that to the splendour of its name, and the charms of its literature, he was no stranger, nor insensible. The intellectual superiority not only of its sages, but of its inhabitants, must have been to him a welcome congeniality and a strong excitement; but it was something else which stirred his spirit in him, and stimulated the moral daring

of the effort, through which the historian has enabled us to track his course, or rather to watch his flight. Athens was the very focus of idolatry. Its altars, statues, and temples were multiplied beyond parallel, and reckoned more numerous than those of all the rest of Greece together. Petronius, the satirist, who was living then, said, 'That his country was filled with gods, so that it was easier to find a god than a man.' Athens was called the altar of Greece; and that 'the city was wholly given to idolatry,' or more correctly, was so full of images, roused the apostle to come forward as the champion of Jehovah, and demand the restoration of their homage to its rightful object, the only God, the Father of Christ.

On many minds the effect would have been different, for idolatry there put on a most fascinating and a most formidable shape. It had much to impose on the senses. Probably no scene of mortal creation was ever so enchanting as that presented in a walk through Athens during its splendour. From the plundered and disjointed fragments of its beauty, our artists draw their noblest inspirations; and in them our country boasts a treasure of which all civilized nations may envy the possession. Oh! to have seen them glittering in their own sunshine, in proud harmony with the temples from which they have been torn; to have passed through those streets which were but long galleries of godlike

forms in marble, and ascend that Acropolis which was the citadel, not only of their safety, but their fame; to have witnessed the living magnificence of their worship, and especially of their festivals; the gorgeous attire of their priests; the solemn pomp of their sacrifices; the interminable variety of their processions; the multitudinous concourse of their citizens; the clouds of fragrant incense that alone could obscure their transparent atmosphere; the thrilling delight of music resounding from roofs whose beams had been the masts of Persian fleets; the majesty of their theatres, which inspired the sense, not so much of pleasure as of sublimity; the agonizing excitement of their games, and the distribution of those simple prizes of the palm-branch, or the crown of olive, pine, or parsley, for which Europe has no sceptre or diadem that the victor would have taken in exchange must he have bartered his Grecian glory too; to have seen these, and idolatry pervading them all as their vital spirit, and reigning by them over hearts and minds, might rouse the zeal of a Paul; but a feebler faith would have dissolved in the enchanted cup, and been incorporated with the profane libation.

Athenian idolatry had much to charm the imagination. It not only had been adorned by the most gifted hands; it not only had a rich stream of song ever flowing through its consecrated grounds; but it was essentially poetical, the very child of

fancy; and its Pantheon the vision of genius made visible and palpable to all. Its deities were the beings whom the poet sees in his day-dreams on the shores of the ocean, or by the bubbling fountain, or in the recesses of the grove, or on the mountain's summit. They were not the original product of the pallet or the chisel, nor their original abode the marble temple; for their first creator was poetic enthusiasm, and their first shrine the poet's soul. Nor did it want for means to seduce the judgment, for in their mythology was many a noble truth, which some might deem the lovelier for its graceful veil of allegory; and they had a philosophy, which has indeed obtained in most ages, teaching to think with the wise and act with the multitude; and the example of their most venerable sages sanctified an outward conformity with detected superstition; and their countless divine persons might be resolved into one divine essence, as easily as a smaller number; or as even now the philosophic Brahmins of Hindostan profess to adore but the one God in whom they believe, in the homage they pay to their deified thousands, whom they account the personifications of his attributes.

With all this fascination to attract, idolatry had also terrors to strike with awe. Bloody penalties had vindicated its insulted altars. Nor was philosophy allowed too contemptuously to curl the lip even at its most childish ceremonies. The martyrdom of

Socrates was a memorable lesson. With all social enjoyments and occupations; with all the actions of private, and forms of public life, was idolatry incorporated. Patriotic recollections and paternal education gave it all the strength and fury of prejudice for its protection. There were yet the laws which imperiously and capitally prohibited the introduction of a new religion by individuals—there was yet, though shorn of some of its powers, the dreadful tribunal of the Areopagus. And there was, still more formidable, the zealous attachment of the multitude, soon roused in such a cause to rage, and the ready executioners of any sentence dictated by their own mad passions.

Why did Paul not waver, nor shrink—nor his mind feel any impulse but to the bold assertion and demonstration of the sole Deity of Jehovah, the God of Moses and of Christ? What nerved him against so much to entice the unstable, and confound the timid? He knew that, under this specious outside, there lurked a system of falsehood; that an idol was nothing in the world; that they were the creatures of men's hands or fancies, and not the creators of heaven and earth; that, however adorned, the whole was but a monstrous pile of delusion and imposture: he knew that, to a great extent, it was both the result and the source of criminality; that its basis was fabulous, its oracles mere tricks, many of its ceremonies licentious, and its ten-

dency degrading to heart, mind, and character. He knew that God was one; so to be traced in nature, so revealed to the patriarchs, and by Moses to the Jewish people; and so declared by Christ, the divinely commissioned and universal teacher: that worship is his due alone, and rendered to others at the peril of the worshipper. He knew that acceptable homage consisted not in the victims they offered to placate, or the exhibitions they framed to please their deities, but in the language of the heart, in contrition, resignation, and filial love; an adoration in spirit and in truth. He knew that a corrupt religion entailed a corrupt morality, and had relaxed the bonds of duty, and bent its standard to their passions, and obliterated its sanctions, and led them far from the rule of right, and the prospect of retribution. He knew that, however such deviation might be palliated in times of ignorance, God had now introduced a new and universal dispensation, and commanded all men every where to repent. He knew that Christianity would conduct even the best and wisest of them to a nobler wisdom, and more exalted virtues, and richer privileges, and sweeter enjoyments, and the otherwise unattainable dignity of being the conscious sons of God, bearing his image, and possessing his blessing. He knew that Providence, by the foolishness of preaching, saved them that believed, confounding things that were wise and mighty, that

no flesh might glory. He knew that truth, religious truth, so all-important to man, brings with its knowledge the obligation not only of consistent conduct, but of manly profession and zealous propagation. He knew that, as a chosen minister of Christ, his apostle to the Gentiles, and so honoured after being a deadly persecutor, there was a woe upon him if he preached not the Gospel; and he knew that whatever earthly inducements there were of blandishment or terror; whatever he might incur of self-denial, loss, disgrace, or peril, all was trifling in the prospect of that appointed day when God would judge the world in righteousness, by Jesus Christ, and all receive according to their deeds. On these convictions he acted; and he did well and wisely, for humanity, for Christianity, for mankind.

And there was something to such an one as Paul, that was spirit-stirring in the mighty array that he had to cope with. He was full of courage and of hope. In the cause of Christ he had gone on conquering, and would trust that, even here, he came to conquer. He felt that it was enough, even if he saved but one, to recompense the effort and the peril; that it was enough if, by his faithfulness, he only delivered his own soul. But his was a mind to look and aim at more than this. He felt the splendour of the triumph there would be in levelling the wisdom of Athens, and the idolatry of Athens, at the foot of the cross; in

making Jupiter, Neptune, and all their tribes give place to Jehovah; and Zeno, and Epicurus, and Aristotle, and Plato, and Socrates, succumb to the man of Nazareth. He burned to make Olympus bow its awful head, and cast down its coronet of gods, at His feet who dwelt in Zion; and the pæans of Bacchus and Apollo were, in his ear, but preludes to the swelling 'song of Moses and the Lamb.'

Animated by such feelings, we may now regard Paul, in what must have been one of the most interesting moments of even his eventful life, preparing himself on the hill of Mars to address an auditory of Athenians on behalf of Christianity. He would feel the imposing associations of the spot on which he stood, where justice had been administered in its most awful form, by characters the most venerable, in the darkness of night, under the canopy of heaven, with the solemnities of religion, and with an authority, which legal institution and public opinion had assimilated rather with the decrees of conscience and of the gods, than with the ordinary power of human tribunals. He would look around on many an immortal trophy of architect and sculptor, where genius had triumphed, but triumphed only in the cause of that idolatry to which they were dedicated, and for which they existed. And beyond the city, clinging round its temples, like its inhabitants to their enshrined idols, would open on his view that lovely country, and the

sublime ocean, and the serene heavens bending over them, and bearing that testimony to the universal Creator, which man and man's works withheld. And with all would Grecian glory be connected, the brightness of a day that was closing, and of a sun that had already set, where recollections of grandeur faded into sensations of melancholy. And he would gaze on a thronging auditory, the representatives to his fancy of all that had been, and of all that was, and think of the intellects with which he had to grapple, and of the hearts in whose very core he aimed to plant the barbed arrows of conviction. There was that multitude, so acute, so inquisitive, so polished, so athirst for novelty, and so impressible by eloquence, yet with whom a barbarian accent might break the charm of the most persuasive tongue; over whom their own oligarchy of orators would soon re-assert their dominion in spite of the invasion of a stranger; and with whom sense, feeling, and habit, would throw up all their barriers against the eloquence of Christianity. There would be the priest, astonished at an attempt so daring; and as the speaker's design opened on his mind, anxiously, and with alternate contempt and rage, measuring the strength of the Samson who thus grasped the pillars of his temple, threatening to whelm him, his altars, and his gods beneath their ruins. There would be the Stoic, in the coldness of his pride, looking sedately down, as

on a child playing with children, to see what new game was afloat, and what trick or toy was now produced for wonderment. There the Epicurean, tasting, as it were, the preacher's doctrine, to see if it promised aught of merriment; just lending enough of idle attention not to lose amusement should it offer; and venting the full explosion of his ridicule on the resurrection of the dead. There the sophist, won perhaps into something of an approving and complacent smile, by the dexterity of Paul's introduction; but finding as he proceeded that this was no mere show of art or war of words, and vibrating between the habitual love of entangling, bewildering, and insulting an opponent, and the repulsiveness which there always is to such men in the language of honest and zealous conviction. There the slave, timidly crouching at a distance to catch what stray sounds the winds might waft to him, after they had reached his master's ears, of that doctrine, so strange and blessed, of man's fraternity. There the young and noble Roman, who had come to Athens for education—not to sit like a humble scholar at a master's feet, but with all the pride of Rome upon his brow, to accept what artists, poets, and philosophers could offer as their homage to the lords of earth. And there, perhaps, aloof, some scowling Jew, hating and hated, loathing the contamination of idolaters, but glaring with savage fury on the apostate son of Abraham

(as he would deem him) who held so much communion with their souls, as to invite them to an union of love and piety in the name of the detested Nazarene. And if for a moment Paul felt, as one would think man must feel, at being the central object of such a scene, and such an assemblage, there would rush upon his mind the majesty of Jehovah; and the words of the glorified Jesus; and the thunders that struck him to the earth on the road to Damascus; and the sense of former efforts, conflicts, and successes; and the approach of that judgment to come, whose righteousness and universality it was now his duty to announce. Unappalled and collected he began, 'Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious (very religious.) For as I passed by and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom, therefore, ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth,' &c.

What a glorious, what a beneficent doctrine! Had this single truth been all that revelation taught,

it would yet have been most worthy of God to bestow, and of man to receive with joy and gratitude. It identifies all nations—it asserts the affinity of all the families of the earth—it proclaims *the brotherhood of humanity*. The Apostle Paul might well bear the scornings of the proud sophists of Athens, strong in the philanthropic consciousness of having such a truth as this to teach them; descendants of demigods as they thought themselves, and masters of slaves as they were. How magnificently does it level distinctions, whether of colour, rank, nation, or religion! It rebukes the boastings of pride, the bitterness of hostility, the sternness of bigotry, the coldness of selfishness. It declares to each, that the object of disregard, hatred, or contempt, is a man, and man a brother. It knows nothing, it will hear nothing of the thousand pretensions set up for the gratification of vanity, and the indulgence of malignity. What prejudices have been already beaten down by it, and how many prejudices yet exist to which it is opposed, and which it shall yet beat down! That there are in the world different classes of men, heaven-born and earth-born; the blood of some a celestial ichor, to which that circulating in the veins of others is but as base puddle; that there are different races, with such disparity that it is for some to be luxurious lords of creation, and others their saleable, fettered, tasked, beaten, and branded

beasts of burden; that a man's clan or country has exclusive title to his affections, exertions, duties, concentrating every thing within that narrow circle except a pitiless hostility to all of humankind beyond its narrow boundary; that there are natural antipathies — hereditary national antipathies, which should make mighty and enlightened countries each other's foes from generation to generation, and from age to age, desolating one another and all the world around them, each dreaming that the evil of its neighbour was its own good; as if the poverty of millions in one country could make a neighbouring country rich; as if the slavery of one country could make another country free; as if the misery of millions in one country could raise another to the summit of felicity: and that there are in the sight of God, man's Maker and Father, eternal differences and distinctions; some walking the earth in the pride and glory of his inalienable blessing, others born, living, dying under the influence of his wrath and curse;—differences sometimes evaporating in spiritual pride or busy zeal; at others, shaping themselves into the more noxious forms of alienation, persecution, denial of the courtesies of life, and infliction of the bitterest injuries. These were, and these are, under the various modifications produced by ancient and present modes of thinking, evils which the Gospel was given to mitigate and to annihilate; with

which its spirit maintains everlasting warfare; against which it appeals to our piety, our benevolence, our justice, our consciousness; confronting which, in their strength, it rears its banner with the inscription which, in the day of their destruction, it will place upon their tomb, that 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men.'

What is the full meaning and comprehension of this doctrine of the brotherhood of man? How has it been inculcated by revelation? What are the influences it should exercise on our hearts and lives? These are the questions which suggest themselves; and if the replies be so simple and obvious as to afford little of intellectual stimulus or gratification, they yet so belong to the first, purest, and best feelings of our nature, that I trust, in making them, your sympathies will go along with me, and every sentiment find the ready echo of enlightened minds and generous hearts.

I consider the Christian doctrine affirmed in the text, as involving four distinct, but closely-connected assertions.

1st. *Man's common origin.* All are descended from the same parent—they had all one father on earth, and they have all one father in heaven. This is the assertion of the Mosaic history; and it is a rational inference from recorded facts and existing appearances. Opposing traditions have vanished, with other gloomy shadows, from the enlightened

parts of the earth; and opposing philosophical theories are vanishing after them. Physiology has ceased to find specific differences in men; and traces, in the greatest diversities of form and colour, only individual varieties, which, occurring at an early period, have been perpetuated and spread by hereditary transmission. The laws of population lead us to one first-created pair, about the period assigned in Scripture history, as an adequate solution of the existence of all earth's millions; and one, therefore, which we cannot reject without violating the received, and reasonably received, rules of philosophical speculation. This gives a literalness to the doctrine which has its worth to many minds. Our fraternal relation to mankind is not a practical figure, a pious fraud, a benevolent phrase—it is a literal historical fact. Divided and distinguished as we are, physically, by seas, mountains, climates, colour, modes of life—divided morally, as we are, by education, opinions, prejudices, government, philosophy, religion, these divisions all narrow as we go back to a little undivided family, which then was the whole human race; into which ourselves, and those most remote, most dissimilar, most hostile, are alike resolvable; and that we were then so identified in fact should now identify us in heart, and swallow up every little feeling in the sublimity of that philanthropic union.

2nd. *Man's common nature. One blood* is one

essential mode of existence—one physical and moral constitution. Man is one, for men are of like 'parts and passions.' The principles of thought and feeling obtain alike with the operations of the brain and the pulsations of the heart. Hence it is that we can reason universally on man; and know that oppression will degrade, injuries exasperate, kindness conciliate, and unchecked power corrupt. 'His blood is like ours!' shouted a Marseillois peasant, as that of Louis XVI. spouted from his headless trunk upon the guillotine. It was—and therefore it should not have been shed. It was—and therefore the expression should have been one, not of vengeance, but of mercy. It was—and therefore that should have been, not an exulting shout, but a whispered caution—an admonition of the peril of weak humanity in power. Well were it if the master felt this before his slave had wrested emancipation from him, to check his tyranny; and if the freed slave felt it after, to check his retribution. This is the basis of all sympathy. This makes us understand, without actual experience, something of the miseries of want and exile. Let the gay and prosperous call them up to their imagination, and then consult their hearts. They may but see as in a glass, darkly, the extent of the suffering; but that dim reflection will yet be a faithful one—will yet be enough, or should be, to move them to painful sympathy and active aid.

3rd. *Man's common subjection to divine government.* 'God hath made of one blood all the nations of men.' He hath made, and placed them in the same relation to himself. Wherever there is man, there is a creature of his formation, and the object of his love and care. Wherever there is man, there is a being of all whose actions and of all whose thoughts he is the unseen but ceaseless witness. Wherever there is man, there is a being in whose soul he has implanted aspirations after himself, a propensity to religion, a feeling after Him, if haply he may be found, which may be misguided by superstition, or almost stifled by ignorance, or elevated by knowledge into the purest piety; but which yet is there. Wherever there is man, there is a being all the circumstances of whose existence, all the events of whose life, the number and colour of whose days, are of his controlling, directing, and ordaining. Wherever there is man, there is one whom his providence is subjecting to its discipline, whom his summons will call to render an account at his tribunal of impartial justice, and whom he is preparing for an existence which shall endure for eternal ages. In these momentous matters—and what can compare with these—we are all one in his presence.

4. *Man's common destiny.* He who made all of one blood, made them all to one end. They all tend towards death, judgment, eternity.

I must now advert to the way in which the Scriptures teach this doctrine; and teach it they do, incessantly, prominently, emphatically, from Genesis to Revelations. It is the first of their facts in one form, and in another the last of their prophecies.

Whether the introduction of the book of Genesis be literal or allegorical—a history, a parable, or a mythos—this is one of the principal lessons which it was given and preserved to inculcate. The first pair are presented to our imaginations, that in their creation, their innocence, their paradise, their fall, and their expulsion, the sympathy with which they touch our hearts may expand them towards our brethren. That narrative is no bigot's invention. It traces back the stream of life, that at its source, however remote, we may learn it is the same, however long it may have flowed, and broadly spread. See the ark that floated on the waters, when the flood destroyed and renovated the world: it bore the destinies of humankind. They were again one family; sharers in a common peril, heirs of a common salvation. In the call of Abraham, the apparent commencement of an exclusive system in the separation of the Jewish people, what was the great promise to the patriarch? There was nothing exclusive in that. It is the key to the Jewish peculiarity. That system, so far as it was one of peculiar privilege, was only so for greater common good ultimately. 'In thy seed shall all the families of

the earth be blessed.' There is a beautiful diversity in its repetitions, *families, kindred, nations.* Revelation has been sometimes charged with teaching divine favouritism. Here is its most exclusive blessing, and it is simply the promise of a good from which there shall be no exclusion. Go on to the deliverance of the Israelites. Why that is a record at which oppression shall quail, and slavery glow in reading, while the world shall stand. How new *then* in the world were the precepts of their legislator, that the stranger among them should be as one of them, in all legal rights, for they were strangers in the land of Egypt! How nobly did their prophets keep alive this beneficent truth—'Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us?' Excellent question! for which humanity should bless the Jewish bard that uttered it. 'The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.' They meet, not only in the grave, but in the house of God, and in the good man's heart. *Son of man* is an appellation which we owe to them; and is there not affection in such phraseology? Christ came. He answered the question, 'who is my neighbour?' He immortalized the good Samaritan, and opposition to national antipathies and religious antipathies could be carried no farther. Here he makes you respect virtue in a deadly enemy, as, in the prodigal son, you are taught to compassionate suffering in the vicious outcast. He

founded the worship of God as man's Father. Every repetition of his prayer is a solemn pledge of universal benevolence. He predicted a judgment in which to visit the prisoner, feed the famishing, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, are the ground of admission to eternal glory. How did he commission his Apostles?—'Preach the Gospel to all nations.' They did so. There was no flattery of Jewish or of gentile prejudices. They made 'both one in Christ Jesus.' Who feels not a noble expansion of heart in that declaration of Peter, when he trampled on the old barriers of bigotry, and entered the house of the Roman Cornelius, exclaiming, 'Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him and worketh righteousness is accepted with him?' Who rises not in dignity with Paul, as on Mars Hill he declared to the Athenians, 'God hath made of one blood all nations of men?' Look at Paul's arguments to the Romans and Corinthians on the resurrection. In both he identifies Christ with mankind, and reasons to an universal resurrection as an universal blessing. John argues on morality like Paul on doctrine—'He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?' The Apostles have been called inconclusive reasoners: their reasoning at least proves the boundless benignity of their system, and that is something to-

wards its heavenly origin. I cannot expound the Revelations, but there is one vision in the book about which there can be no dubiety. The writer beholds all creatures joining in a common act of grateful and blissful adoration: 'and every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever.'

Thus, from their commencement to their close, do the Christian Scriptures tell man to have a brother's heart for his fellow-man, in all his goodness, in all his errors, in all his sufferings.

This doctrine is a stimulus to piety. The God who thus made us all, is a God for us all to love. He is not like the imagined deities of heathenism, who were, by the partial exercise of their powers and bestowment of their favours, objects of worship to one tribe, and of abomination to all others. His righteous claim is on the human heart. He is the personification of its noblest notions of supreme benevolence. His excellence rises above the loftiest height to which imagination can climb, and spreads beyond the widest expanse to which it can extend. The frame of man is his temple; the heart of man, his altar; the soul of man, his priest and worshipper. The identity of our nature, in the multi-

plied millions of its individual possessors, is a monument and emblem of the identity of his love, in the multiplied millions of its eternally varied acts of beneficence. 'All that have breath praise the Lord,' said the Hebrew bard; and so says the voice of universal nature. If there be any manifestations of his Almighty love in which we should exult; if we should praise him in the review of our own little vicissitudes of joy and sorrow—in the contemplation of the heavens which his hand has spread abroad, and the earth which he has established for ever; in the prospect of the better heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness which he hath prepared; surely also we should exult in the fact that he hath made of one blood all the nations of men, and feel the force of the apostolic argument, 'If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.'

O what a rebuke, what an admonition is here to tyranny, cruelty, bigotry, and all those baneful passions and bad principles which sometimes rage in man, with a ferocity unknown to the brute creation, making their own kind their victims!

Oppressor, what are you crushing? Bigot, what are you cursing? Man-destroyer, legally or illegally, by your own hands or others, in the field or on the scaffold, by royal edict or assassin's dagger, what are you mangling? The image of your God, in your brother's person; and every drop of that stream you are spilling on the dust like water, is of

your own blood. God made you and him of it—of the same, of *one* blood; that you might dwell on the earth in unity and peace, in good will and charity, and mutual affection. Think, proud ones of the earth, as you trample in scorn upon the necks of multitudes, that it is your own nature and blood that you debase in their debasement. And if you felt as it is shame and crime for man not to feel, you would writhe like the noblest spirit of chivalry under the blow of cowardice or the brand of the galley slave, at every insult which you now wantonly offer to humanity. Tyrants and oppressors! what are you doing, with your exactions and extortions, your proscriptions, banishments, and executions? You are laying waste human homes and hearts. You are violating that law of brotherhood which alone gives you a place in the rank of rational creatures; and selling your best birthright for passion's or flattery's mess of poisoned pottage. In your momentary success, you are but subjecting *yourselves* to guilt, *others* to misery, and in both fearfully triumphing over your own nature, and making it a suffering, a loathsome, and a hellish thing. You are flying in the Almighty face of God, who to all nations of men bears the relation of their common Father.

Bigots! drop the thunderbolt—hurl not even in fancy the eternal curse of the eternal God at a heart that throbs as sensitively as your own. Spirit

of that Gospel whose name avarice and ambition have profaned so foully, possess the hearts of those who vainly take it on their lips; and let men learn, at length, the song of Angels, 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men.'

What a stimulus to moral excellence is this glorious doctrine of man's fraternity! It creates a delightful and ennobling feeling of identity with the human race—with whoever have been the worthiest of that race—in the breast of every individual. It makes us *one with the excellent,* in all the glory of their excellence, telling us that we are of their blood; that it is *our* nature they dignify by deeds which become the children of the God of righteousness and love. Who can read or hear of what man has done of goodness; how, for some worthy object, he has borne unrepiningly the accumulated privations of lingering years; and has compassed sea and land, the pilgrim of benevolence; and has put forth exertions of body and of mind, till both seemed consuming in the intensity of their own energy; and has sacrificed ease, and fortune, and health, and fame itself, when most deserving of its brightest meed; and has braved opposition, and scorn, and power, and danger, and ingratitude, and death: who can contemplate this, and not feel that his nature is a summons to virtue; and that if he only does that which 'may become a man,'

he will only do that which is generous and exalted?

Yes, we are one with those who, in our own or any other age—who, in our own or any other land—have heard their country's call to labour or to suffer in her cause, to assert her rights, to guard her safety, to redress her grievances, to improve her institutions, and to redeem her population from the darkness of ignorance, the yoke of slavery, the abyss of degradation, and become the heroes or the martyrs of humanity. Yes, we are one with those who, through the long line of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, reformers, have been heaven's messengers of good to earth; who, in the most pestilential times of moral corruption, have stood like Aaron of old between the dead and the living, to stay the plague of sin and suffering, and avert the stroke that would smite the earth with a curse. Yes, we are one, in holy faith, and reverential love, and sincere obedience, with him, the Son of God, the Son of man, who prayed that his disciples might be in him, and he in them; one with him as he is with the Father; that first-born among many brethren who taught and exemplified perfection, the perfection of boundless, ceaseless love to all that live.

This doctrine makes us *one with the oppressed and suffering;* with those who pine in the wretchedness of poverty, who wither under the blight of

disease, who sicken with the pangs of hope deferred, whose backs are bared by the lash of slavery, whose hearts are riven by the thunderstroke of calamity; it makes us sad in their sorrows, and ministers to their consolations. It is an appeal that reaches the hearts of those who have little else to proffer for relief but the kind feelings of those hearts.

> Man is dear to Man: the poorest poor
> Long for some moments, in a weary life,
> When they can know, and feel, that they have been
> Themselves the fathers, and the dealers out
> Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
> As needed kindness; for this single cause
> That we have, all of us, ONE HUMAN HEART.

Remember too for purposes of humility and charity, for the suppression of pride, censoriousness, and wrath, that this doctrine makes us *one, even with the wicked:* with those whom ignorance leads blindfold into guilt and misery; whom successive temptations plunge in ever-deepening degradation; whom passion seizes with its giant arm, and hurls from the proudest height down headlong to ruin.

It unfolds to us, in common principles, the sources of what strikes with horror, and touches with a brother's earnestness for their deliverance; and melts a stern disgust into a tender pity; and teaches, while we rigidly avoid, not so rigidly to condemn; and reminds that this is not the whole of their character, nor these the sole capacities of their nature;

and if beyond *our* reach, yet bids us hope that the God who made us of one blood, may yet, though by a long, painful, and awful process, unite us in one destiny. While we feel, and strongly, for the wretched slave, let us remember that the slave-master too is man. While we have a mournful sympathy with the baffled and crushed patriots of one land, or an exulting sympathy with the triumphant patriots of another, let us remember that the tyrant, and tyrant's minions too, are men; that they were made and meant for better things than these; and still within them lives that capability, an immortal spark, which futurity may cherish, and raise them to the level of their earthly victims, and purify them even from the bloody stains of their successful guilt, and re-unite them to the humanity they have insulted, and admit them to the happy brotherhood against whose progress they have waged an impious warfare. Believing in the Christian doctrine, we cannot despair of man, either of the individual, or of the whole human race. Good is stronger than evil. God is the common Father. All nations are of one blood. There is yet, in the plan of Providence, a blessing for all nations. It shall cover the earth—cover it as the waters the bed of the ocean—cover it with a boundless deluge of freedom and felicity. Our common nature and lot is the pledge of affection, and the spring of happiness and hope. And it is a latent sense of this

universal fitness for, and universal destiny to virtue, that makes us even now express the strongest praise by language, which else were no commendation at all; and say of uncommon excellence, '*This was a* MAN!'

SERMON VII.

BLESSING THE POOR.

MATTHEW v. 3.

'Blessed are the poor, in spirit; for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.'

I APPREHEND that the true construction of this verse requires the separation of the words 'in spirit' from the word 'poor;' that they are the poor, literally, who are spoken of, and not a supposed class of characters described as 'poor in spirit;' and that 'in spirit,' or 'by the spirit,' relates not to the character, but to the blessing; or rather to the agency by which that blessing was to be bestowed or manifested. The poor might be despised by the world, throughout all its kingdoms, but the Spirit would bless them by investing them with the dignities and privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

Wetstein, one of the greatest names among critics, connects the words 'in spirit' with the epithet

'blessed;' Campbell, one of the first names among translators, contends that the 'poor' literally are spoken of, and not the poor spiritually, or metaphorically. Although my exposition of the meaning may, perhaps, differ from that which either of these illustrious men would have advanced, yet the construction of the passage on which that exposition rests, may, as far as I have stated, claim the sanction of their authority.

That this is the true construction and meaning, may be shown by referring to the parallel passage in the gospel of Luke, vi. 20. There, the words 'in spirit' are omitted altogether. 'Blessed (be ye) poor, for yours is the kingdom of God.' And not only so, but the blessings, v. 20—23, are followed by denunciations, v. 24—26, which are in antithetical opposition to them, clause for clause, and character for character; and the antithesis to the poor is not the rich in spirit, but the rich literally (v. 24). 'Woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation.' The poor literally must therefore have been intended in the first clause; and if in Luke, then also in Matthew, for the discourse is evidently the same.

Indeed, poverty of spirit is not, in any fair and natural explanation of the phrase, the description of a state of mind to which we can attach the Saviour's benediction. 'Spirit' is either intelligence or energy; and in both senses poverty is to be deprecated. As

to the first, it describes ignorance; and 'blessed are the ignorant,' the poor in attainment and comprehension, the poorly instructed, is assuredly no Christian beatitude, nor a tenet of any faith, but the degrading one which holds ignorance to be the mother of devotion. No; blessed are the rich in spirit; the man whose capacious mind is like an eastern palace; in itself magnificent, and its wide spaciousness adorned and filled with diversified treasures, its lofty turrets commanding an ample horizon, circling field, flood, and mountain, art's stately gardens, and nature's wild loveliness; and its hundred gates, ever open for the welcoming of each worthy guest from all earth's regions, far or near. That God will raise the minds of all, in heaven, to this amplitude of capacity and intellectual wealth, is the noblest promise of divine revelation. In those of its disciples who attain it on earth, the Gospel shines with its most resplendent brightness. Our 'unction from the holy one' is that we may 'know all things.' This is the true anointing of the Spirit, which is shed forth on the followers of Christ. It makes men wise, not foolish or ignorant, unto salvation.

Nor, if 'spirit' designate energy, can we regard poverty of it as a benediction. Strength efficiently to act what we have intelligence wisely to will, is to bless both others and ourselves. Christianity no-

where canonizes feebleness of purpose or of performance. It has generated and developed the mightiest energies which have ever acted upon the world, and before which the powers of the world have quailed. The production of moral strength is its great object. It inculcates the fear of God to annihilate the fear of man. It realizes a world to come, that, by its votaries, this world may be overcome. It sends forth its preachers, 'strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might.' They were men who defied 'principalities and powers, and spiritual wickednesses in high places.' They were *rich* in the spirit, in its miraculous power, in persuasive eloquence, in unflinching determination, and in persevering and successful exertion. And in that richness they received the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

The interpretation of 'poor in spirit,' by humble or meek, is without scriptural authority for such a meaning to the phrase; and would introduce a very unlikely repetition, as we have, just afterwards, 'blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth.'

The common meaning of 'spirit,' in the New Testament, is the power of working miracles; in which sense the Gospel was preached, 'with the holy spirit, and with power;' the spirit was given to Christ 'without measure;' was poured out

on the Apostles, to whom he said, 'receive ye the holy spirit;' and Christianity was the 'dispensation of the spirit.'

The common meaning of 'kingdom of heaven,' in the New Testament, and its almost, if not altogether, exclusive meaning in this Evangelist, is the supernatural dispensation by which Christianity was introduced and established in the earth; the age of miracles in which signs followed, in them that believed; and by which Christ's authority and dominion were manifested, from the time of his ascension till the destruction of Jerusalem.

It was expected by the Jews generally, that the Christ would be a temporal sovereign; and by Nicodemus and others that he would select the rich and powerful to be the agents of establishing and administering his kingdom. He took an opposite course. He chose the poor for that purpose. The poor were usually the objects of his miraculous benevolence, when exercised in his own person; and of the poor were those who, when the time came for him to employ others, were the instruments for that purpose; and thus the whole class of society to which they belonged was honoured and blessed.

And in this was typified the character and influences of his gospel. From that time to the present it has been the blessing of the poor. It has mitigated the hardships, and multiplied the comforts of their condition. It has proclaimed their

common nature, and common brotherhood with the richest and the noblest. It has affected most benignantly, both their external condition, and their internal feelings. It redeemed them first from domestic slavery, and then from feudal vassalage. It made others reverence humanity in them, and made them reverence humanity in themselves. It has raised a thousand kind asylums for them in their destitution; for the helplessness of their childhood, the accidents of their maturity, and the infirmities of their age. It has directed towards them the justice to which they have a right, and the charity for which they felt the necessity; it has penetrated their minds and hearts, and in countless instances, from being only a little above the brutes, made them only a little lower than the angels. It has made them contented in life, resigned in calamity, hopeful in death. It has verified the moral climax of Christ's description of his work to the messengers of the Baptist, when as something yet more glorious than all, after healing the sick, the lame, the blind, and even raising the dead, he concluded with the preaching of the Gospel, the proclaiming of glad tidings, to the poor.

Without going further, on the present occasion, into the illustration of this fact, there is a moral and practical inference to be deduced from it, which I would impress on the minds of those whose stations elevate them above the lowest class, and

who would imbibe thoroughly the spirit of the religion which they profess—and that is, that the great aim and end of our efforts should be the amelioration of the condition, the physical, mental and moral condition of the poor, *i. e.*, of the great mass of society.

In what is done for the poor, though much good may be realized both to the recipient and the benefactor, for mercy 'is twice blessed; it blesseth him who gives, and him who takes,' there is yet large waste both of feeling and of power. There is often a want of judgment in the aid rendered to public institutions, and in the private kindnesses of individuals; many charities are objectionable in their nature, and do less good in the immediate relief they afford, than they do harm by encouraging a want of foresight, an improvident spirit, which cannot be effectually helped, till the sufferer learns to help himself. There is often a deficiency of union, of co-operation, by which the good realized is the least, instead of the most possible that the means could produce. There is often a vain attempt to do that in a private capacity, which can only be accomplished by public and national acts. Thousands upon thousands of pounds spent, and scores or hundreds of preachers employed, to mitigate the asperities between Catholic and Protestant, never did, and never could have produced so much effect, as the passing of the Catholic emancipation bi!

That was a better preaching of the glad tidings of peace to those contending parties. Those who wished for that result, but who thought only of subscribing and preaching, had only a zeal without knowledge; they willed the end, but not the fittest means; they had the merit of desiring a great good, nullified by the culpable inattention which left them in the dark as to the best and only way; those electors who chose legislators, and those legislators who carried the measure, they realized the tendency of Christianity as to that particular case. And, moreover, there is the general want of a great and distinct object, by which benevolence should be rendered more intense in its emotions, more uniform in its efforts, and, though it may be longer, more certain and glorious in its results. This great and distinct object, and which as men, as citizens, as Christians, we may find some opportunity of forwarding every day of our lives, is, I think, best expressed in the language just used, the direction of all public institutions, and private efforts to the amelioration of the condition, physical, intellectual, and moral, of the poor, *i. e.*, of the great mass of mankind.

How much yet is to be done for the physical condition of man upon the earth, for his bodily wants and enjoyments! Some labour is requisite for the full development of man's bodily powers. There is a point beyond which it becomes injurious to strength, health, and life. That point is passed

by a large proportion of the community. Every man ought to work in some way or other, with head or hands, or he ought not to eat; but society ought not to require of any one that he toil to the excess to which countless thousands are compelled to toil, to procure daily food. Excessive labour precludes all cultivation of the higher faculties of our nature. Say not that it cannot be helped. It might be helped, to a large extent, promptly; to an indefinite extent, progressively. If there be laws which operate for the pecuniary benefit of certain classes, to enhance the price of articles of common food, whether produced here or imported,—it would be helped by such an expression of opinion as would ensure the repeal of those laws. If the invention, and continually extending introduction of machinery always operates exclusively, in the first instance, to the benefit of the capitalist, it would be helped by arrangements, which could easily be devised, for giving the labourer and mechanic his share of the good which science and art confer upon the world; or at least facilitating the transfer of his strength and skill to some other department. If in every corporation, and every trade, there be regulations, sometimes legal, and sometimes not, by which men are prevented from bringing their labour to a fair and open market, and from changing from one occupation to another with facility when the fluctuations of trade bring distress on that to which

they belong, it would be helped by enlightening society as to the injustice and perniciousness of such interpositions. If, by wisely arranged co-operation, the command of associated numbers over the necessities and comforts of life can be multiplied, then this object would be advanced by promoting such co-operation. If a man were to devote himself, head, heart, and soul, to any one of these purposes, he might probably realize it; and he would do more, infinitely more, towards bettering the physical condition of the poor, than if he were to dispose of the amplest fortune in the country in charitable donations.

How much is yet to be done for improving the intellectual state of the most numerous class! How many thousands there are in this country, this enlightened country, as it yet comparatively is, who cannot read and write! And what does merely being able to read and write amount to, even with saying the catechism withal? This is not education. Every child born into the world is a rational and immortal being; capable of knowledge, reflection; endowed with memory, reason, judgment, imagination; and created for their development. Every society, so far as it is Christian, receives a new brother in such child; another member of that great family which God has formed of one blood; another heir under that great charter by which the Creator vested the earth in man, for common support, and

common enjoyment. Why, then, every such child ought to be educated, and well educated. Its powers should not perish for lack of culture. If its parents be too ignorant to prize, or too poor to purchase education, society should provide it. Society should not allow a child to be uneducated, throughout the wide extent of the empire; it forfeits thereby the moral right to command its services, or to punish its crimes. Did not those burning stacks which of late illumined county after county proclaim, (all-eloquent tongues of fire!) that England had not sufficiently taught her children for them to distinguish what would alleviate, from what could only aggravate their wretchedness? The people must be educated; not in the stinted, flimsy, and useless way to which our charity schools too commonly confine themselves; still less by the more deplorably inadequate machinery of Sunday schools, often only a pretext for making them repeat by rote the catch-words of some sectarian creed; but so as to inform and rationalize them; so as to endow the human animal with mind, and call the torpid soul into conscious existence and activity. The expenses of early universal education would scarcely exceed, I do not believe they would exceed, the loss sustained in cheating, and robbery, and other crimes; and the confinement and other punishments, with the costly apparatus for conviction and infliction, which would be thereby prevented. In these times,

the millions will inevitably learn that they are the physical strength of the community; it is for their friends to teach the further lesson that its blind exertion will only pull down the temple of society on their own heads as well as on those of their superiors, and make the whole one tremendous ruin. But this is a low motive. Wherever there is man, there ought also to be intelligence. In proportion as the kingdom of heaven comes in Christian hearts, will the poor, by their spirit, be blessed with knowledge. Let each bear this in mind, and promote it as he can, and when and where he can.

The amelioration of the moral condition of the poor cannot be extensively effected without, and would naturally follow from, that of their physical and intellectual condition. These should go hand in hand with direct efforts for their religious instruction and improvement. For these efforts there is a large field. How can we say that the Gospel is preached to the poor, while we wait for the poor to come to its preaching? which so many there are that cannot do; so many more that will not; and to all of whom it should be sent; and sent in the spirit of its Author. Provision for themselves too often occupies men almost exclusively, in spiritual as well as temporal concerns. There has for some time existed in America—there has commenced here, a ministry for the poor, sent

to them, 'to seek and to save that which is lost.' Nor will religion ever thoroughly penetrate and pervade the great mass of society till it become more completely and influentially universal in the conceptions of the religious themselves. It must penetrate and pervade all studies of the mind, all affections of the heart, all pursuits of the life. Religion is that vital love which, in the Deity, gave existence to the universe; and which, in us, is the bond that binds man to man, and man to God. Is not the hope of this becoming universal,—far remote as that result may be,—an impulse to present good, a source of present usefulness, a spring of present joy? When the great mass of society shall come under the influence of the soul-felt conviction that all we are brethren, and God our common Father in heaven, there will be an end of the impurities, and vices, and graspings, and envyings, and strivings, which now present a scene so loathsome and degrading. Society will then readily fall into such order, that man will not be continually feeling that he is out of his proper position, and must struggle with some other to gain it, and rise on his fall. Each will fill his own sphere, and move in harmony with others. Men will rise according to their capacity, be estimated according to their worth, be rewarded according to their works; and acting here on the principle of the

future kingdom of heaven, they will realize a portion of its blessedness.

Think not of the remoteness of such a state of things; it is that apprehension which makes it so remote as it is; it will be the less remote the more distinctly it is anticipated. Call it not a mere vision; for so far as we can appreciate the principles of revelation, and decipher the history of humankind, this is the end towards which Providence is tending in all its diversified workings. 'There are manifold operations, but the same spirit.' Dismiss it not as a speculation, which, however benevolent and pleasant, still is but a speculation, and has no immediate influence, practical influence, on our own individual feelings and conduct. Indeed, that is not the fact. It is calculated to have an immediate and practical influence on our hearts and lives. In contemplating the final destination of human society upon earth, its tendencies towards universal association for universal good, in the bond of a religion whose power is love, we are acquiring a practical guidance for our exertions and charities from day to day. They become more systematic, and therefore more efficient. They are not mere coruscations of kindness, flitting across our horizon, and leaving it again in darkness; but emanations of one central orb of light, fixed in the firmament, and shining with unsetting and unvarying lustre.

How little he does in his benevolences who looks no further than removing the particular evil which may chance to be presented, or gratifying the particular sympathy which may chance to be excited, compared with him whose feelings work for themselves a defined channel, springing from a distinct source, flowing towards a distinct object, and in the minutest efforts keeping in view that great and glorious purpose. Give men thus an aim, and good is doing, not only in the act itself of charity, but in the whole of life, in all that influences others to be like-minded, in conversation and correspondence, in the intercourse of business and in that of pleasure, in the crowd and in retirement, in the civic hall and in the temple of God. Perhaps there are many benevolent, but aimless men, who do as many acts of particular kindness in their lives as Howard himself did. It was the distinctness and uniformity of object that gave to his conduct such power, and made him one of the world's benefactors. In contemplating the final destination of human society, we find not only guidance but support. It is a strong hope, the world's advancement, in whose assurance we little feel many disappointments on behalf of humanity, which else would plunge us in anguish and despondency. Having ascertained the direction in which the great tide of things is flowing, it does not dishearten us that here and there is a backward current which we know can be but

local or temporary. The scope of philanthropic vision is much wider than that of the acutest political perspicacity. Political measures may be lost or carried; dynasties may be expelled or restored; constitutions may be framed, remodelled, or abrogated; but in the one case society can only make the advance for which it is prepared, and in the other it cannot be thrown back far beyond the point for which it has ripened. There is a spirit in the earth, and destined to rule the earth, by which the poor, the mass of mankind, shall be blessed, and which will make them heirs of the kingdom of heaven, the only universal and everlasting monarchy. In contemplating the destiny of mankind, we quicken our love for mankind. Our hearts overflow with that intense and yet expanded benevolence which makes man perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. This love is perfection. As the imagination of Christ dwelt on the glorious vision of a redeemed world, he was strengthened to accomplish the world's redemption. The universal good thus becomes our own individual good; it is realized in our minds, longed for by our hearts, and striven for with our energies. This is the spiritual life in us, an emanation of Almighty love. And so we ascend towards, as well as trace out, our own destiny in that of mankind. The full, proportionate, and perfect development of our nature is that for which we were called into existence; that which

the gospel stimulates us to realize as far as possible here, and promises us in ampler measure hereafter, when, by the transformation of death, this mortal shall put on immortality. And it is God who is working all this; in us and by us; in others and by others; he is all, in all; the universal spirit, and in that spirit the universe is blessed. Let our bosoms glow with his love, and our voices sing his praise, making melody in our hearts.

SERMON VIII.

THE LAW OF LABOUR.

2 THESSALONIANS iii. 10.

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat."

THE First Epistle to the Thessalonians seems to have been so interpreted, as to induce the expectation that the end of the world was at hand. This expectation was the occasion, or the pretext, of various disorders. Amongst other evils was this, that some of the disciples abandoned their worldly occupations, and claimed support from the funds, which had been, it is probable, collected only for the maintenance of the poor. They thought they had only to exist till the great convulsion came. The apostle, having first explained that this speedy anticipation was a mistake, proceeds to reprobate the irregularities which had resulted. He especially reminds them of the example he had set, and the precepts he had given, before that urgent occa-

sion for their application had arisen. While with them, he had laboured with his own hands, and had commanded 'that if any would not work, neither should he eat.' They had, therefore, been rebuked by anticipation—by language and by conduct which was not got up for the particular emergency, but which had internal evidence of its arising out of the permanent spirit and general principles of the Gospel. The rebuke was the better adapted to impress their minds with a sense of its truth and justice. Often has this early instance of the errors and wanderings of enthusiasm been repeated or imitated, and it has been needful, like the apostle, to appeal to the plain and everlasting principles of morality.

And the apostle's maxim *is* a valid appeal to those principles. The laws of revelation are the laws of nature; and the precepts of Christianity are expositions of the dealings of Providence. The text declares concerning the individual, that which creation declares of universal humanity. The earth is the Lord's, and he hath given it to the sons of men: and mankind collectively have a divinely chartered property in, and dominion over, the land, the waters, the air, and their various animate and inanimate productions; but it is only by labour that this gift is accepted, that this property is realized, that this dominion is exercised, and the treasures of the world rendered available for the

purposes of support and of enjoyment. Profusely as earth pours forth her stores to the hand of industry, it is only to the hand of industry that she pours them forth; and notwithstanding the spontaneous fertility of some particular spots, it is true of the human race, as a whole, that if they did not work, neither could they eat. Without toil, all the palmy state and beautiful adornments of existence; all the memorials of the past and the prospects of futurity; all the overflowings of intellect, and the comforts of civilization, would disappear; the populous city would soon become a wilderness; marshes and forests would reassume their ancient reign over the wide lands redeemed by art and industry; the human race would dwindle to a few savages, whose subsistence would be not more wretched than precarious; and the world would retrograde, first to a moral and mental, and then almost to a physical, chaos. Human labour is the hand of the Lord by which, in nature's wilderness, gardens of Eden are planted, and watered, and stored with all that is pleasant to the sight, and good for food, till, in their energetic fruitfulness, there grow the trees of knowledge and of life. And it is a wise and blessed condition of things. This necessity for labour has been the main-spring of human improvement. It has stimulated inventions, and conducted to discoveries, and developed sciences, and organized society. 'Labour and sorrow' may have been

companions, but indolence and wretchedness would have been everlastingly associated. That companionship is only for a time. Dignity and joy are labour's offspring. The infinitely blessed being is a being of eternal and essential activity. The language of man's perfect exemplar was, 'My Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' The natural, the revealed, the moral *law of labour*, is a *law of love*.

Very much of the happiness of the world, and of individuals, depends on this law of labour being rightly understood and cheerfully obeyed. It then becomes the abundant source of enjoyment and improvement in the community, in the household, and in the church. To evade, break, or misapply it, is to produce injustice, degradation, and suffering. Yet by vanity, idleness, or selfishness, are these experiments incessantly made, and in spite of uniform failure, incessantly repeated. The opposite extremes of society both furnish instances, and both injurious to society and destructive to the individuals, of attempts to live without labour.

Heavy as is the pressure on the lower classes of the community, it is yet beyond doubt that great numbers have voluntary recourse to beggary or theft from impatience of the restrained life of regular industry, and the hope of obtaining a larger supply of their wants and desires with greater ease. It is useless preaching *to* such; they do not commonly present themselves for moral instruction. It

may not be useless to preach concerning them to others, whose very opinions, properly expressed at proper times, may do much to mitigate, and ultimately remove the evil. Children of industry, respectable, thriving, moral, what would you think of yourselves, if some member of your own family were left, from very infancy, without any care to form his mind or heart; if every bad passion were allowed to grow unchecked; if he were turned out into the streets, to associate with the vilest, and catch every physical and moral infection; if, as might be expected, he soon sounded the depths of profligacy and iniquity; if to him all reputation was the admiration of successful trickery or violence, and all enjoyment, the indulgence of the grossest animal appetites; if, to the thick darkness of his soul, not only the pleasures of intellect and taste, but the worship of God and the hopes of religion, became utterly inconceivable; if he only felt and knew of society, its interests, claims, laws, and order, that with him they were at war; he preying on it, and at last becoming its victim by that death of a dog, in which civilized society takes leave of its abandoned offspring?—I shall not repeat, what would you think of yourselves, because your minds cannot get to that stage of the supposition; and you say it is an impossible case altogether. And so it is, for you individually; but is it not the fact collectively; and is not this the history of thou-

sands, whom God made of one blood with ourselves? And is this a case for society, as if in injured innocency, to make, from generation to generation, a penal application of the apostle's maxim? No: it is for society, of which each one of us is a responsible portion, to seek the better course—of prevention. The great prevention is moral education. No good man should rest till this is secured for every child born into the world. A contemptible fraction of the public money spent in warfare during the last half century would secure this for our country. It can only be done by a great public act; and that is the necessary result of the aggregate of enlightened and determined individual opinions. Work at this, and you will be spreading for futurity the gladsome feast of a social redemption of the most depraved class of the community.

Let us advert to the other extreme of society. There is the same mistake. The inheritors or possessors of property think themselves a privileged class, exempt from this natural and Christian law. They imagine they have nothing to do in the world but to consult their own gratification. Providence punishes their shortsighted selfishness, and executes upon them the threatenings of the divine enactment. Though endowed with mountains of wealth, an idle character is a worthless character. Its tendency is to frivolity, vice, and wretchedness. When

by the social and legal guarantee to a man, of property which his own hands have not earned, but those of another, we tell him, that for him this law of God shall be suspended, and that though he work not, yet shall he eat, and revel in luxurious abundance, we minister to the worst passions and propensities. His pride is inflated with his immunities. He is a creature of privilege, not a brother of mankind. *He* belongs to one caste, and the hewers of wood and drawers of water to another. There must be stimulus for him to occupy himself; and the readiest stimulus is often the worst. Pleasure becomes his business, and licentiousness his pursuit. He looks jealously on the powers, the rights, even the mental attainments of the lower classes. His chief public concern is with the defence of the interests of the few against those of the many. He is essentially an immoral character. Society has claims on him, though not enforced by the penalty of literal starvation. The duty of a man who finds himself so situated is to repay society for securing to him the earnings of another, by voluntary labour for its benefit. He should thus make good the deficiency of his moral title. He should create for himself a work. He should inquire in what his talents, character, opportunities, station, best enable him to serve the community. He should take charge of some of the many machines of usefulness at which busier

hands cannot obey the dictates of kind hearts to labour. He will reap the reward. He may thus become a useful man, a good man, a great man, a happy man. If his self-chosen path be that of legislation, he will be the friend of wise and equal laws, keeping pace with, and promoting the progress of humanity, and elevating the condition of the most numerous class; if that of literature, he will not pervert his powers for the sake of mere notoriety, but aim at those intellectual toils which require leisure and opulence, and have the reward of lasting usefulness; if that of charity, he may give it that wise direction for want of which it has so often aggravated the evils it sought to remedy. The world is before him, and only asks him not to be a cumberer of the ground. Let him work; individually or socially; mentally, physically, politically, charitably,—only let him work; and if it be the work of our Father in heaven, he shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life eternal.

This same word *work* is often applied to that which, in an honourable sense, does not deserve the name; and often withheld from that by which it is deserved. It is to be hoped the world will soon grow too wise to let so much labour run to waste. How large a portion of the attention, the powers, the time, the means, of almost every man of business are consumed by that system of rivalry and competition which pervades almost all occupations,

and which is only so much loss to the community. The greatest production, and the readiest change of commodities, are all that mankind want, or derive advantage by. This, and this alone, is the work by which the world eats or profits. The restrictions by which a man is prevented from pursuing in any place an avocation for which he is qualified; the competition by which one is ruined, while another gains a more or less complete monopoly; the complication, as in legal proceedings and documents, produced by the interests of a class which gains thereby, at a double loss to the community; these, and a thousand like things, which might be enumerated, are labour wasted for want of a better understanding in society. Christianity should make us desire, and as far as we can, promote arrangements by which all toil tends directly to produce good, physical, intellectual, or moral. And there is an opposite evil; there is a prejudice cherished by some against all occupations which do not bear upon man's physical existence and material wants. The principle of the text demands a wider meaning of the word 'work.' 'Man shall not live by bread alone.' There is a life of the soul, of the intellectual and spiritual nature, cherished by those influences of knowledge, truth, beauty, harmony, which are influxes on man of his Maker's spirit; and the communication of which is certainly a not less noble labour than that for the meat which

perisheth. He who acts upon the reason, imagination, or feelings of his fellow-men, by manifestations of his own, so as to enlarge and supply their capacities of pure enjoyment, he works and ought to have his reward: he who explores the arcana of science, ascertaining what God does, and on what principles, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; he who deciphers the monuments, and tells the tale of man, as he has lived, thought, felt, acted, suffered, in lands that are distant, and in ages that are gone; he who has the plastic power of genius, that creates its worlds in others' souls and senses; he who accumulates, arranges, and simplifies for the young, or for the multitude, the contributions of sages, historians, poets, artists; feeding the mind to a higher maturity by giving heavenly bread to eat which it knew not of; and he who guides the divine light of love and truth into darkened minds, and sends it home to cold hearts, and has the ministry of reconciliation to recover the world to its God; these all may be deemed unproductive by the low-minded calculator, who only asks, 'What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?' But they produce that which makes life worthy of the name; they earn at least all that the world usually gives them; they endow society with a wealth more precious than that of the husbandman and vine-dresser, which else would only feed men on the

level of the beasts that perish; they work, and let them eat; for if there be truth in their speculations and hopes, if the effects which mind has produced by them, and such as them, in the past, be a presage of the future, theirs will be the agency of so enlightening mankind, that society will become, not the arena of strife and the scene of depravity which it now is, but an association for mutual instruction, enjoyment, and improvement, where every one shall be placed according to his capacity, and rewarded according to his works.

In those smaller communities, in households, families, circles of associates and friends, how much may be done, quite independent of and beyond all that is required for bodily support, the common purposes of education, and the maintenance of external appearances! Each one may and should do something to deserve well of the whole. One has the knowledge that instructs, another the accomplishment that charms, another the activity that serves. Children even may do much, by their attention, docility, respectfulness, for the comfort of those most distant from them in age and feeling. And what may not woman accomplish? The customs and notions which restrict her from much, yet leave her this sphere, and she may fill it with blessedness. Happy they who have witnessed the demonstration of this power, when it is, with her, a study, an art, a science, a work, to multiply, by all

the means within her reach, the pure and pleasurable emotions of all to whom her influence extends; when there is not a peculiar taste that she does not remember and consult, not an infirmity that she does not carefully avoid irritating, and gently prevent others from wounding; when without increased expense, a delicate taste makes every object and arrangement seem more than commonly beautiful and harmonious; children and servants yielding implicit obedience to the only law that can command it, and *that* must be wisely administered to command it —the law of love; the ordinary broils, and troubles, and misfortunes as they are called, of families, anticipated by a keen foresight; every day, in what is generally its mere filling up, the getting through the time by each and all as they can, having its peculiar tendency of enjoyment or improvement impressed on it by the directing spirit; and withal no ostentation, no boast nor bustle, no ignorance of or indifference to the great affairs that involve the good of society, but all being merely the silent, systematic application to her task of a sound mind and a lovely heart. In the imagination of such a character, I have described a work and enforced a duty. There is scarcely a house in which there are not annoyances when there might be enjoyments; in which there are not, every day, some painful sensations which might be pleasurable ones; in which female judgment, tact, thoughtfulness, and kind-

ness, acting in an enlightened, conscientious, benevolent, and persevering manner, might not increase, by portions separately so small as to be indescribable, but in the aggregate a mighty sum, the amount of human happiness. Solomon says that 'a continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike:' and the simile describes woman's benignant influences too, which, with that kindly dropping on the proudest pile of man's best achievements, thus soothed, supported, and stimulated, will wear an inscription lasting as the hieroglyphics on Egyptian columns, but commemorating better deeds, and preserving a more blessed memory.

I spoke of the church as under this law of labour. In the kingdom of Christ flourish no gilded idlenesses, which toil not, neither do they spin. It is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy; but the righteousness comes first, the peace and joy only follow; and 'if any will not work, neither shall he eat.' No man can have the full fruition of Christian blessings and hopes in his own bosom, who has been criminally neglectful of diffusing them in the world. The Gospel imposes on each, according to his opportunity and ability, a work of zeal and labour of love: 'To do good, and to communicate, forget not.' It is the forgetfulness of your business as a Christian. Men are too apt, even in religion, even in the Christian religion, to

think only, or too exclusively, of themselves—ministers for their own instruction, chapels for their own assembling, books for their own reading; and there an end. Let this be done; but in duty as in prophecy, 'the end is not yet;' there is more, not of calamity, but of good, to be realized. We have need to look more systematically, and act more energetically, for the diffusion of religious knowledge, with all its happy concomitants of moral principle and unfailing consolation.

And of individual exertion, and individual reward, the text is eminently true, as to religion. He who takes no thought nor pains for moral improvement is sure to deteriorate. His indolence will bring on him the curse of moral starvation or disease. There is always something to be done, for self-correction or self-improvement. There is always in religion need of the emphatic injunction, 'whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might.' Who is so wise in the things of God, as to have no ignorance left which study may remove? Who so free from fault as that heart and life offer no crooked things to be made straight—no need nor place for reformation? Who so bright in all Christian graces, that there is no quality yet to be added to perfect the starry circle of his crown of glory? Let *them* be idle. But they cannot. For in the wisdom they have acquired is this—that increase of divine knowledge is the increase of divine enjoyment. In

the follies they have corrected is this—the folly of ever resting while yet more remains to be done. In the graces they have gained is this—the activity that urges on, and will eternally urge on, towards infinite perfection. The more man does in religion, the more he is able to do, and is desirous of accomplishing. And short enough is life for the moral probation assigned to it—for the preparation we should make for that immortal world on which at death we enter. Soon perhaps may the Master's voice summon us from our toil to our rest, from our rest to judgment. There, a proportionate recompense awaits each and all of us. 'Work while it is day—the night is coming.'

SERMON IX.

GATHER UP THE FRAGMENTS.

JOHN vi. 12.

"Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost."

THIS direction is not more remarkable for the homely and practical wisdom which it contains, than it is also for the extraordinary circumstances under which it was delivered. This plain precept of carefulness, economy, and frugality, occurs in a narrative of the supernatural—follows the multiplication of so small a portion of food as five barley loaves and two fishes, into sufficient to satisfy the hunger of five thousand persons; and introduces the consummation of that miracle in the quantity which remained, and which confirmed the impression on the minds of the multitude, so that they said of Christ, 'This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world.' There is, therefore, a double lesson to be learned from it; the one direct, by considering merely the force and spirit of the

injunction in itself; the other inferential, growing out of the comparison of that injunction with the recorded transaction. And this last view of the matter is by no means unimportant, but may be subservient to our preservation from mistake in the application of the precept to our conduct in life; and may further open to us such views as will expand, elevate, and dignify the direct application of that injunction, and enhance its importance and utility.

First, then, we attend to the obvious and direct import of this precept. It applies to the every-day concerns of all except the very few whose ample and superfluous means secure to them the command of all they desire, so far as wealth can purchase it. It is equivalent to the household proverb of 'waste not, want not,' a proverb as good as if it were Solomon's; and, indeed, the same in substance with several in his collection. To all who have to struggle, as so many must, for support or comfort, diligence in the attaining of their resources is not more essential than carefulness in the employment of those resources. The hand of the diligent will *not* make rich, or even usually preserve from distress, unless the eye of economy watch over its earnings. The fragments which many neglect, are those by the gathering of which others fill their baskets, and increase their stores. A little carelessness in scattering will baffle much carefulness in accumulating. Political economy has been called a new

science; domestic economy is an old one; but not half so perfect, either in theory or practice, in proportion to its age. One of its commonest defects is a heedlessness of those fragments of expenditure, which, separately seeming insignificant, in the aggregate become, perhaps, of vital importance. Women, especially, should have clear heads, quick eyes, and steady hands, for these matters. Their gleanings may make all the difference between a good harvest and a bad one. To borrow an illustration from our Lord's teaching, they should pick up the crumbs which fall from the table: if they only feed the dog that watches at the gate, it is something gained; they may be needed for the children themselves. It is impossible to pursue this topic into detail. Much might be done to mitigate the privations of poverty, and facilitate the struggles of the class which is above poverty, but whose struggle is in many cases yet more arduous and anxious.

The precept applies to the improvement of time. No one resolves deliberately on sinking years, or even months, in utter idleness and unprofitableness. And yet the waste even of years is no uncommon thing in human life. They go in fragments. The years are spent in weeks or days, and the days in hours, and the hours in minutes. We reckon twenty-four hours to the day; but when we speak of the day in reference to man's voluntary power over it, its

disposability for purposes of improvement or enjoyment, a very large deduction must be made. Taking away the seasons of rest and food, and passing from place to place, even those whose circumstances give them most command over their time have only a day of little more than half that amount. Their loss of an hour a day is a loss of nearly a month a year—a loss of almost five years in a life of sixty. But with the great majority, the day which they can command is only a fraction of this. Their time is necessarily sold for the purchase of the means of physical support. They have bought bread with it, and it is gone. Their day, their profitable and disposable day, for intellectual and moral purposes, is seldom more than three or four hours; and in wasting only half an hour each day, they fling away ten years out of their threescore and ten, should they have so many. A few calculations of this sort would make them as astonished as the disciples were at the baskets which their fragments filled. There are quite as surprising things in nature as in miracle; and they both enforce the same moral admonitions, and warn us against despising fragments. Gather them up: if nothing should be lost, surely not *time*, the most precious of all, and the most hopelessly irrecoverable when once it is wasted.

We apply the precept to the preservation, by literary or other means, of the remains of things

gone by, but of which it behoves us to have what knowledge we can obtain, because the past was the commencement, and contained the germs, of the present in which we live, and of the future in which we are so deeply interested. Extraordinary men, peculiar modes of life, states of society, systems of philosophy, nations, languages, religions, have fled and left the world; and if we cannot realize them in our minds, so as to have an adequate and perfect notion, let us at least collect the fragments, which may teach us much of wisdom, and impress lessons for the sake of which they existed in the plan of Providence. In some way or other, all traces of the past are available; all physical traces of a former state of the globe itself, 'fragments of an earlier world,' the petrifaction which had life, the strata which were the bed of ocean: all material remains of human art; the coin with its 'image and superscription;' the implements of war or industry; pillars and pyramids: all relics of obsolete civil or religious polity; modes of government, and modes of worship, which are no longer practised on the earth, with the manners and habits even to the very recesses of domestic life which they produced: the literature of bygone ages, and not merely the laboured works written for posterity, but the occasional and temporary productions which throw so much more light on the individuality of the intellect of a generation: and the incidental in-

dications of character, of mind and heart, in illustrious individuals, which unfold the depths or point to the heights of humanity itself:—these are the true fragments of antiquity; the remains of the feasting of the multitude that once sat in their ranks on the sunny side of the mountain of existence, but are now in the dark valley of death below. Let them, by all whose means and pursuits allow, be gathered up. If many a brave vessel of human power, greatness, and splendour, has been wrecked in the storms of time, let us yet pick up what the tide throws on the shore of our age and country.

There is a moral economy which the text may be taken as encouraging—a precaution against waste in the means of happiness and goodness. There is abundance of both, very much neglected, alike by the votaries of virtue and of enjoyment, who ought to be the same persons, and who will be so, in proportion as knowledge shows that goodness is only the means, and the only means, of happiness. Those who see God, the infinite spirit of love, beauty, harmony, and wisdom, in his works, (and they are the true religionists,) will be ever gathering, from the ground, as it were, some fragment of pure pleasure. The flight of a bird, or the construction of a flower; the blending of colour in the clouds, and the order of motion in the waves; beautiful analogies in the material and spiritual world, which the mere logician scorns, or sees not; oracles

of nature in the prattling of a child; and emanations of an all-pervading spirit of love in the commonest intercourse of life; in these they will see divine helps to the discipline and blessedness of their souls, which are not to be despised because the theologian may not put them in his catalogue of means of grace, or the systematizing utilitarian number them amongst the constituents of well-being. What God, in his bounty, disdains not to scatter, man should not neglect to gather. It is not by the set and formal use of great agencies that either virtue or happiness is realized, so much as by a disposition which passes by nothing that can minister to the object. A beautiful vision made the Patriarch say, 'Lo! God is here, and I knew it not;' and so he felt the Divine omnipresence. Though Christ went up to Jerusalem, to the temple, at the great solemnity, his mind was not so full but that he heard by the way-side the plaintive voice that cried for mercy on the son of David. The world is full of 'ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;' of agencies to elicit and strengthen the dispositions of the good, who are thereby ultimately, and most even now, the happy. To disregard them, is not more ungrateful towards him, than unwise as to ourselves.

I said that this precept was remarkable from its standing in the history in connexion with a miraculous event. We are struck with the proximity of

the homeliest proverbial phraseology, with the splendours of supernatural power. It is one of those contrasts which at first seem unnatural; but which, on closer observation, show the truest harmony. Christ's character was full of them, and yet that character was the perfection of human nature. He exhibited in abundance what are commonly accounted extremes and incompatibilities. He was most profound in his doctrine, and yet enunciated it in terms of child-like simplicity; he was fervently and exaltedly devout, and yet most thoroughly practical and social; he was gentle and tender, melting in compassion, and yet had that intensity of purpose which defies the world, and tramples on the grave. And the fact is, that dispositions and faculties which are often accounted incongruous, and which, when only developed in an inferior degree, are so, in their highest manifestations become perfectly accordant and mutually strengthening and co-operative. We are accustomed to say that argument is not to be expected of this man, because he is oratorical; nor eloquence of that, because his mind is so logical: and if they have but an imperfect degree of those powers, it may be so; if they have them amply, it is just the reverse. The acuteness of Athenian intellect in antiquity, was never more strenuously grappled with than by Demosthenes, the prince of orators. In the records of the senate of our own country, the same

names and the same speeches may be cited for examples of both—of argument the most convincing, and of eloquence the most inspiring or overpowering. Jeremy Taylor was the most subtile of casuists, as well as the most luxuriant of preachers. The bard of Paradise Lost was the Defender of the People of England. Every metaphysical student knows that Shakspeare was not less a philosopher than a dramatist. No man ever in sternness of purpose surpassed Howard; it indicated, not the weakness, but the might of his benevolent principle. We frequently praise the decidedness of Theophilus Lindsey; there was also in him a slowness, caution, and forbearance, which, if separately contemplated, would lead many to pronounce impossible the high determination which he evinced. The most decided are really the most circumspect: the most kind may also be the most immoveable. Much of the notion of incompatibility, in what seem contrasted qualities, arises from ignorance, selfishness, and envy. People who feel that they want one particular quality which attracts admiration, assume that therefore they have the opposite. Such an one is religious, and therefore gloomy, says a votary of what is called pleasure, but who really knows nothing of what true enjoyment is. He is a genius, and therefore has not common sense, says another, who has not the common sense to know that 'common sense,' describes nothing but what,

with much more, is included in genius, as the first half dozen pages of a book must have been read by him who knows the volume by heart. The prejudice might be traced through a thousand forms. They would all come to this: how very strange that these homely, plain words in the text, should have been spoken by one who had just wrought a super-human work, in the name and with the power of God! and the reply is, Not strange at all; for he was the agent of that Providence which spread abroad the arch of heaven, and fashions the blade of grass—which rules the stars in their courses, and guides the sparrow's flight—which fills infinity, and creates and floats the atoms in the sunbeam. And he had risen, as it is the ultimate destiny of humanity to rise, into the image of his Father in heaven. And so completely is this true, that we may easily show, in each particular of the literal application of the text, that it is best fulfilled by those who bring to it the greatest enlargement of mind: so that what seems a minute drudgery is most efficiently performed by those who bring to it a generality of principle, an expansiveness of view, and a loftiness of purpose, with which it has too hastily been deemed incompatible.

To take the first form of the admonition, and regard it only in the light of pecuniary and household economy: there may, it is true, be a blind niggardliness which, in its antipathy to spending, demolishes the very purposes of saving; as there

may be an indefinite talk of household arrangements which has nothing of practical application and tact; but the one is no more economy than the other is principle. The object of gathering the fragments was that nothing should be lost; but everything is lost which does not, sooner or later, minister to enjoyment. The problem of frugality is to make the smallest amount of means produce the greatest amount of comfort. That problem is surely well solved in proportion to the increase of intellect and knowledge. I believe that generally there is more waste in the dwellings of the poor and ignorant than in those of the class next above them. It is because they are ignorant as well as poor. Generally much more might be done with the same means than is done, but for prejudices which only a more intellectual female education can root out. Better acquaintance with the comparative worth of money, as expended in different ways; better acquaintance with the nature, origin, and changes of the different materials of food and clothing; better acquaintance with the workings of mind, and feeling, and character, so as to observe how the power of increasing comfort is modified by peculiarities in every individual: *i. e.*, a better education in the principles of natural science, of art, of business, of mental and moral philosophy; these are what, so far from unfitting woman for her sphere, would give her tenfold power to fill it, from the same

resources, with peace, improvement, and happiness. Those who best know the lower classes, say that instruction of this kind is their greatest want; certainly it is often a desideratum in their superiors. Well-instructed intelligence, mind which, by its general acquirement and power, proves the reality of its acquirement and power in this unwisely-despised department also, will so gather up the fragments, that ignorant parsimony and ignorant profusion shall almost believe it has wrought the miracle too.

And so in the economy of time; it is ever most rigidly and wisely enforced by those whose minds are familiar with the contemplation of affairs of longest date, with the work of centuries and ages, and with meditation on eternity itself. No one heeds his minutes more than he whose mind is profoundly impressed with his destiny to immortality. Instead of there being anything unworthy of learning, talent, or genius, in such frugality, their possessors have ever been most addicted to it. Priestley, with all his multitudinous attainments, and with all his whole days to add to them, was more tenacious of what would be called an odd half-hour, than many who have but few hours in the week to devote directly and voluntarily to the cultivation of their minds, hearts, and characters. In fact, it requires some comparative (at least) expansion of views and greatness of purpose, to make men feel what is meant by the loss of time, to create meaning in the expres-

sion, and inspire the feeling of grief and degradation by which it should be accompanied. The famous exclamation, 'I have lost a day!' was a melancholy testimony how many days are lost by millions, without emotion. It was the revealer, and soon to be the possessor of immortality, who said, 'I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh when no man can work.' And in the gathering, of which we spake, of the relics of past men and times, whatever antiquarian affectation there may have been, the most diligent accumulators have also been men who from such materials could rectify the falsehoods of long-received history, place before us the men and manners of other generations as no professed historians had done, or throw a flood of light on the principles and progress of human nature. Imbued with the noblest principles of science, a few fragments have enabled them to reconstruct the temples of antiquity in all their pomp, and realize to our conceptions the by-gone world.

The minor virtues, the frequently occurring enjoyments, the minutiæ of morals and happiness, so far from incongruity, have a close affinity with the broadest principles of truth, and the most majestic qualities of character. I have little faith in the very good people of every-day life, who are confessedly, and almost boastfully, unequal to the great sacrifices and exertions which are sometimes bounden

duties. The great principles and virtues are the trunk of which the others are the foliage, which we are not accustomed to see flourish independently. An enlightened and comprehensive notion of an omnipresent and beneficent Providence is the likeliest preparation for finding

> 'Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything.'

An enlarged perception of the divine plan of instruction disposes us to elicit lessons of wisdom from a thousand sources, while ignorant superstition is waiting for the oracle. That everything is from God and for good to all, makes good felt where else its existence would not have been suspected. The fragments of enjoyment are best gathered up by those whose imaginations have expanded to the hope of an universe of felicity. All incidental helps to the formation of character tell most on those with whom the training of themselves to excellence is a deliberate purpose and a determined pursuit. It is here as in physics; the minutest atoms are attracted, by a force proportioned to its mass, towards the mountain or the globe.

Let us learn, then, never, in affecting the great, to despise the minute; nor to think of enlarging the whole while neglecting the parts; nor of doing much in years while insensible of the waste of hours; nor of having the happiness of any portion of time while we aim not at that of eternity. Sound

philosophy is the combination of accumulation and accuracy in particulars, with comprehensive generalization. Moral excellence is analogous: and so is the spirit of religion. Christianity has its prayer for the child, and redemption for the world; and the prayer would not be so good were not the redemption so stupendous. That not a single sensation of pleasure, nor the most trifling impulse of benevolence, should be despised or crushed, is the lesson which commends itself most to him who most enters into the plan of infinite wisdom and the prospect of universal happiness. The Omnipotence of the universal Creator ordains that of the merest fragments of his works nothing should be lost. And nothing shall. The withered hope, the broken spirit, the imperfect character, the moral fragments of the present state, shall be gathered up for nobler forms and combinations, as out of dissolving elements shall arise the new heavens and earth wherein righteousness and blessedness will ever dwell.

SERMON X.

THE SOCIAL EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

LUKE vii. 34.

"The Son of Man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners."

A CALUMNIOUS accusation is seldom an unmixed falsehood, even when directed against the purest character. Though it be not truth, it yet will often serve as a finger-post to point the path in which we may journey towards the truth. Scandalous as was the description of Christ, which he himself quoted from his enemies, in the text, it yet was a description which malice itself never would or could have given of John the Baptist. What they said of him was, that he was a demoniac. The fact was, that the one was a stern and solitary man, and the other bland and social; and the fact was used to float the falsehood into the public mind, and give it currency. Malignity is generally shrewd enough

to fix itself on some disposition which is virtuous or vicious according to the degree of its indulgence, and then the comparatively easy work of simple exaggeration or diminution may serve to sully the lustre of the brightest character, and hold up the best men as the worst. But the very process shows that there is something to be exaggerated or diminished, and guides us to what that something is. Without any other evidence than the calumny in the text, we should have had proof that Christ was of a social disposition. We should have known from it, that he was accustomed to mingle with mankind on different principles from those which prevailed among the supercilious hypocrites who took the lead in the Jewish society of that age. We might, with very little other knowledge of him, have been able to perceive that the latter part of this charge, false in the sense in which it was meant to be received, of sympathy with the despised persons referred to, was true in another sense, and as honourable a truth as could be recorded of him. The friend of publicans and sinners must have been a disinterested and generous friend. He must have had a soul full of benevolence and energy. He was the friend, not only of the friendless, but of the scorned and trampled on. There is moral heroism in the allegation: it gives a glimpse of a great work of beneficence. His friendship to such must to them have been recovery, deliverance, salvation.

And so the curse became a blessing, the shame a glory; and Pharisaic malice, like Balaam of old, over-ruled by the spirit of truth, with which it thought to tamper for its base purposes, hears its own constrained utterance doing homage to the excellence it meant to vilify.

The truth thus gathered inferentially is abundantly confirmed by the facts of the Gospel narrative. They describe Christ as eminently social. Not social in the sense in which vain and empty creatures are, who are unaccustomed to, and dread, solitude; who live not only without God in the world, but without mind in the world; who suppose *living* is to see and be seen, to be talked to and to talk; who find the seclusion intolerably wearisome which might be intensely interesting, and utterly vacant which might be most amply occupied. This is not sociality, but inanity, which seeks kindred inanity for its relief. Christ was much alone. Alone for days and nights on the mountain side; alone for weeks in the recesses of the wilderness. There is no strength of mind, nor depth of reflection, nor solid worth of character without solitude. There is no progressiveness without it, and that is essential both to mental and moral greatness. But he was no solitary dreamer, no monk or hermit, no mere meditator even on the things of heaven, no mere student even of the truth of God. He was in willing and frequent

intercourse with mankind. He sat at meat with the Pharisees, in their ostentatious hospitality. He turned not from the door of Levi and Matthew, and their publican associates, when they spread the feast of gratitude. He sojourned with the brother and the sisters that dwelt at Bethany. His ministry both began and ended with a social act. His first miracle was at the wedding feast in Cana, when he changed the water into wine. And his last request was made at the Paschal supper, in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, when he expressed his wish that in after times his apostles should remember him as they passed round, according to Jewish custom, the cup of benediction. There can be no doubt of the disposition of the individual, which in this case indicates the spirit of the religion. It is a social spirit. I do not mean, by saying this, to enforce any particular degree of social communication, in any particular case, as a Christian duty. The Gospel is not one of those levelling and artificial uniformity-creating systems, which would plane away all diversities of organization, taste, habit, and pursuit. There is no such sameness, either in the character it forms, or in the heaven it promises; for here 'we have gifts differing according to the grace given unto us;' and 'as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also shall it be in the resurrection of the dead.' But it certainly makes no merit of systematic avoidance of our

ows; and it as certainly points to principles and ings which would render society in the highest ree conducive to good. The ample range which llows to our diversities, habits, or the dictates circumstances, is evident from the contrast, in connexion of the text, between our Lord and the otist. 'For John the Baptist came neither ng bread, nor drinking wine; and ye say, he h a devil (or demon.) The Son of Man cometh ng and drinking, and ye say, behold a glutton- man, a wine-bibber, and a friend of publicans sinners. But wisdom is justified of all her dren. And folly is condemned of all *her* dren, both in the seclusion of superstition, and their mindless and heartless communication. h this latitude then, wherein every individual st discover for himself, by what arrangements of time and pursuits, by what intermixture of ety and solitude he can best improve himself serve others; let us apply the fact of Christ's al disposition, and the spirit of sociality, as it ears in his character and conduct, and in the w Testament generally, to the state of things now ting in our age and country. Let us see what the prevalent failings or mistakes which interfere h the reaping from social intercourse its full asure of advantage and enjoyment. The review y be useful to us in various respects, and have eneficial influence on individual character.

The first requisite is, that *simplicity* and *frankness* which restore speech and manner to their natural occupation of expressing the real thoughts and feelings of the individual. That 'speech was given to conceal our thoughts,' may be a clever maxim for the trickery of diplomacy, but little has it to do with Christian morals and manners. There is a sort of sullen pride, and of false shame, which are often represented by foreigners as our national characteristics, and, perhaps, not without some reason. We seem often to regard our opinions as a property, which is not to be dispensed lavishly, and may not be invaded with impunity. 'I have a right to my opinions, and you have a right to yours, and let us both keep them to ourselves,' is the language of a spirit not uncommon. This is not the way for enlightened opinion to prevail. There is no occasion to confound frankness with obtrusiveness — they have no affinity. But there is much occasion for our saying, at convenient seasons, freely and fairly, what we think. The world would be all the better for it, as to truth; and ourselves all the better as to Christian simplicity. The attitude of defiance is misplaced here. 'Know my thoughts? you could not if my heart were in your hand, and shall not, while 'tis in my own possession,' may be all very well as a resistance to oppressive inquisition, but is not very well as keeping up a conventional mystification and twilight of opinion which individuals have

got beyond. The great merit of many men, of whom we speak as having lived before their age, and anticipated the advance of a subsequent generation, was, after all, perhaps rather in the plain expression of their thoughts, than in those thoughts being far beyond the convictions of, at least, some other men of the same period. Dr. Priestley was a good example of my meaning. He broke the ice on almost every theological topic; saying out that which the speculative had only thought; and he did more by that than by any singular correctness of opinion or elevation of views. And what can be more hostile to the utility of social communication than the conventional coldness and indifference on topics of interest which many affect? There is no excellence without strong feeling. The woman who made her way into the banqueting-room where Jesus sat, to express her bursting gratitude by anointing his feet with ointment, and wiping them with her hair, committed a violation of all the conventional proprieties, which Simon the Pharisee did not fail to remark, nor Christ fail to excuse. To be without emotion, or make a jest of emotion, is one of the worst cants and affectations. It is most injurious to character, and most hostile to the cultivation of mind and heart by social intercourse. In sacred poetry, the social expression of emotion is carried to the highest extreme, and on proportionate occasions

ascribed even to inanimate nature, till the stars sing together, and the trees of the field clap their hands in unison.

One great obstacle to benefit by social intercourse is that *exclusiveness* which the priests and scribes, the aristocracy of Judea, were so scandalized at Christ's disregarding, by conversing occasionally and familiarly with the lower and despised classes of their community. In defiance of a nominally received doctrine, which teaches, with such extraordinary emphasis, the natural equality and identity of humanity, there is a continual effort to cut up the race into classes, to sort them out by a nomenclature of vain distinctions, and then make them as strange as if they were inhabitants of different planets. This exclusiveness, enforced most by the highest, but mimicked almost down to the lowest, infallibly generates a narrow-mindedness, which may sometimes have fatal consequences. The first revolution in France would not have taken its nobility by surprise, had they not been grossly ignorant of the opinions, feelings, wants, sufferings, indignation, of the other classes. To know the diversities in men, which different modes of life and occupation generate, is one of the consequences of a more liberal and extended habit of communication, most useful to the mind of the observer, and, through its influence on him, to the minds of all.

Pretension is very much in the way of men's doing one another all the good they might. There are too many who delight in gathering others around them, not to give them pleasure, but to attract to themselves their observation, and their admiration, though it be only for the most adventitious circumstances. These are the sort of people whom Christ advised, when they made a feast, to call in the halt, the blind, and the beggar from the way-side; and who did not take his advice. It is all over for improvement with the victim of pretension. They whose aim is display are little likely to learn from others, and as little likely to teach others, except it be by the absurdity and disgust of their example. He who says by implication, 'I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my lips, let no dog bark,' can only meet with the sarcasm, suppressed by the civil and the servile, uttered by the proud or the careless, 'Verily you are the man, and wisdom will die with you.' Neither party can so be benefited. 'Ye are brethren;' why do ye assume and domineer by the way? is a question with more rebuke implied, than, 'Why do ye fall out by the way?' Insolence is worse than irritability. He who seeks others, simply to show them what he himself is, in talent, greatness, wealth and splendour, is the proprietor of a sorry exhibition; as would be manifest to himself, could his sight be fairly turned inward on the reality. There doubtless are qualities

which elevate their possessor above others, but one characteristic of their possession is the absence of pretension, and a disposition for the fair interchange of instruction and enjoyment.

A greater degree of *formality* and *expense* attends social intercourse in this than in many countries, which may thereby, in this particular at least, claim a higher grade in civilization. The one rises out of the other, because it becomes no longer a simple question of doing that which to each is, at the time, the most pleasurable. Do we not often hear of persons most qualified to enjoy and to adorn society, who yet lead lives of at least comparative seclusion, on account of the narrowness of their incomes? That narrowness is not half so much to be deplored or deprecated, as the narrowness of the customs which make such a consequence result from it; which make society one of the luxuries of affluence, instead of one of the conditions of existence. Christ's first miracle at Cana helped out the failing resources of the host, and raised them to the expectations of the guests. The spirit of his religion will work a nobler miracle when it makes the pleasure of both parties more independent on such resources.

One of the greatest drawbacks on the advantage of social intercourse, and which is the cause of some already noticed, is what I know not how to call otherwise than by the name of *intolerance*. It is that, in conversation, on a small scale, which intoler-

ance is on a large scale in church and state; I mean the shock, the annoyance, the opposition, the condemnation, which the expression of opinions excites when they happen to be out of the common highway of thought. We are yet, in too many circles, very far from that true freedom of speech which belongs to true freedom of thought. Can it be doubted that there is such a thing as truth on the great subjects of religion, politics, and the constitution of society? If so, can it be doubted that many minds, if independently exercised, must reach that truth, alike in all the civilized and enlightened nations of the earth? Can it be doubted that free thought has everywhere a common tendency, but that it is kept down by the consequences which in society attend its expression? A nation may differ from a nation in its government; a church may differ from a church in its creed; but individuals may not differ from the rest, without the risk of being scowled on, laughed at, shunned, or taxed with bad consequences. This is very bad, and a great bar to improvement. The middle classes in Judea asked whether any of the rulers believed in Christ? They must have been impressed with the proofs of his pretensions, though they did not say so, before they thought of that question. Nicodemus, who was of the Sanhedrim, only came by night; and was abashed by the sneer, 'Art thou also of Galilee?' Now when one considers how

many opinions have afterwards become current in the world, which at first were regarded with horror, as heretical, blasphemous, seditious, atheistical, and immoral, it might make one suspect that this is not the way in which it is wise to treat opinion at all. It might guide us to the conclusion that we should keep clear of such associations, when we hear opinions expressed. We should think it a profitable study to know any convictions to which a human mind can be honestly led; *led*, I say; for all honest opinion is involuntary, and therefore not the subject of praise or blame. Nobody should be thought the worse of for any opinions, so long as they are opinions, and not affectations. Were people to leave off being shocked with one another, they would begin to understand one another, and that would be a good step towards understanding all matters on which the world has not yet arrived at knowledge and truth. I was for some years partially acquainted with one of the best books in the Unitarian controversy; but some of the criticisms shocked me; I thought them wild, far-fetched, and of a bad tendency; and so for that time I would read no more, much to my own loss. And thus it continually is with books and people. The worst of all tendencies is the tendency to suppression of thought, which is that of truth, which is that of virtue, which is that of happiness.

I shall only mention more, the want of mental cultivation in individuals, as an obstacle to deriving

the greatest advantage from society. Those who are improving themselves most will, when they come together, most improve one another, and give most enjoyment to one another. The lowest is apt to pull everything down to its own level: 'As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of man his friend;' but alas for the iron, if the friend be only clay! The moral of the parable holds here: 'Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, that he may have abundantly.' There is a view in which individual improvement is the dictate of benevolence to society, and benefit from society the reward of personal improvement. It is the common character of real duties, which are all real interests. In enlightened society, the largest giver is, unfailingly, from his very capacity, the largest receiver. It is measured back into his own bosom.

In these remarks I have noticed many things which it is beyond the power of individuals to alter, which spring out of the manners of our age and country. Let not the remarks, therefore, be thought misplaced or profitless. I would excite no individuals to a crusade against society; but how do errors, theoretical or practical, wear out of the world, save by individual conviction, felt and expressed, and accumulating till it becomes the spirit and the power of reformation? It is something to have the eyes of the mind open to see, and the heart not heavy to understand. And if you

have heedfully followed me, you will have felt that all these observations on society were one great lesson of individual duty and improvement, of personal and Christian morality. For surely he who appreciates and cherishes a frank simplicity of character, a strong sense of human brotherhood, an aversion to ostentation and pretension, rational, unexpensive tastes and habits, justice towards others' mental rights, and charity for their failings, and a constant desire and effort for improvement, both in and by solitude and society; he who does this, is in the way of growing in grace and knowledge. He is making himself more and more worthy of the name of a disciple of Christ. It is mere superstition to say that this is no part of religion. It may not be a part of that by which priests can profit; or on which to build a fame for superior sanctity; or by which to hold together a sect or faction; but it is not the less a part of religion, Christianity, on that account. It is an important part, for it enters largely into the formation of character; and that is more than can be said for many dogmatic articles of faith, for many ceremonial forms of worship. Let there be many such persons in all sects of religion, and there would soon be an end of sectarianism. Let there be many such persons in all classes of society, and there would soon be a demolition of classification. Let there be many such persons in all nations, and there would soon be an

end of internal tyrannies and external aggressions. Let there be many such persons in society, and society would not be a scene of coldness, hypocrisy, affectation, and competition; but God's family of human brethren on earth. Then, is not this religion? and Gospel? And may not we do ourselves good, Christian good, spiritual good, by pursuing such a train of thought? I think so. And that it will tend to make us grow up in all things into him who is our head, even Christ: Christ the friend of publicans and sinners, because they had no other friend; the friend of all, in being *their* friend; because he who raises any, benefits the rest: their friend—but not less the friend of the most enlightened and most righteous; the friend of every description of men, because he was the friend of mankind, the saviour of the world.

deficiency or forgetfulness on that score; and so far as my knowledge extends of the disposition within, and the circumstances without, under whose influences they act, there is adequate motive for their doing whatever is right and useful in this particular, without invoking the aid of the more powerful sanctions of religion and morality to impel a better observance. So far as modern times need this virtue, it is a virtue of native growth in our country. England has long been the generous hostess of all earth's fugitives. Thither they came, in turn, to escape from revolutionary fury and regal vengeance. This island has long been one great temple of hospitality, the sanctuary and asylum of the oppressed. If for a time there were any exceptions to this generosity, they have all been owing to the policy of our statesmen, and not to the feelings of our countrymen. The national heart was always right, and a right noble heart it is. The madness of continental despotism has ever elicited and illustrated the glory of British hospitality. Why then, it may be thought, put forward a precept, which is doubly rendered obsolete?—obsolete, by the indigenous vigour of the disposition which it was meant to cherish, but which needs not cherishing; and obsolete, by the difference of our manners and condition, which otherwise provide for that convenience for which, in those times, private hospitality was the chief provision. And I reply that it is put

forward, not on account of its direct, but of its indirect importance. It is put forward because it has acquired, in one way, at least as much interest as it has lost in another. And if there be little use in my preaching to you on the duty of hospitality to strangers, there may be no little use in the thoughts and feelings arising out of the fact that such a precept was so earnestly enforced on the first Hebrew believers in Christianity.

The precept is a valuable relic of antiquity; of a different state of society; of a lower degree of civilization: it carries us far back to a ruder period; it carries us far away to eastern regions. In the progress of society there is a stage in which hospitality to strangers is reckoned among the first of virtues, for this plain reason, that its practice is among the highest utilities or the greatest necessities. Among many eastern tribes, with their unchanging manners, and in thinly peopled countries, we find men remaining long at this stage. But for the custom of such to give food and shelter to the wayfaring man, the charities of life, and the security of life, would soon be at an end. With the multiplication of inhabitants; with the improvement of the arts; with the diffusion of the conveniences of life; with the increased facilities for travelling, and security for property, and all the multifarious arrangements of the more perfect forms of political society, we come into a much better condition, though it may

be less adapted to strike the imagination. The precept which reminds us of the contrast is a lesson of gratitude. The sceptic on this point would perhaps be satisfied by the actual comparison of a journey of any given distance in such a country as this, and among any of the semi-civilized tribes that yet occupy any of the not semi-civilized regions on the face of the earth. In proportion as the precept ceases to be obligatory in promoting hospitality to the man whom we know not, it becomes obligatory in promoting gratitude to the God of whom we do know that he has caused our lines to fall in pleasant places, and given us a goodly heritage. The allusion of the writer in the text, I take to be to some occurrences in patriarchal history. He refers to the period when oftentimes in fancy, and sometimes perhaps in fact, beings of superhuman nature wandered visibly about the earth, in the outward form of men, and sojourned in the tents of those whose virtues they were commissioned to put to the test, and to whom they became the unexpected agents of reward or punishment. So the three men, as they seemed, stood by the tent of Abraham in the plains of Mamre, in the heat of the day; and accepted the simple viands which he courteously offered, and his services, as he stood by them under the tree, when they did eat; and ere they left, gave him that gracious promise, in which Israel gloried through all succeeding generations. And

so the two angels came, as common travellers, to Lot at eventide, as he sat in the gate of Sodom; and he rose up to meet them; and bowed his face to the ground; and prayed them to come in to their servant's house, and tarry all night, that he might send them on their ways in the morning; and he pressed them greatly; and he spread his feast; and he protected them from insult; and they told him of the coming doom of the devoted cities, and counselled his flight, and promised him security in the destruction. And other histories are there, of a similar description, showing God's superabundant blessings on man in the discharge of his duty and the exercise of generosity; and illustrating the assertion in the text, that while they only thought of kindly entertaining strangers, some had entertained angels unawares.

There is a narrow and short-sighted criticism, which in its mistaken strivings after verbal accuracy, is apt to overlook too much the opinions and modes of thought which prevailed in Judea, and which, because the meaning of the word angel is simply messenger, would always so interpret it, to the exclusion of those notions of a superior race of beings, so denominated from their office, in which the Jews manifestly believed, firmly and generally. According to critics of this class, we must in such a passage as the text, interpret the term of human messengers, the angels, *i. e.*, the messengers or ministers of the churches, or of the Gospel; a sense in which the

word certainly is found, especially in the commencement of the book of Revelation. The text will then mean, that in their indiscriminate hospitality to strangers, they might sometimes unawares receive, and be edified by, some of the authorized messengers of the Gospel; some who would well repay their kindness by the communication of useful instruction, or interesting fact; who would bring new light to their minds, and fresh gladness to their hearts; who were bearing over the world's wilderness the water of the spring of life eternal; heralds charged with the proclamation of the spiritual jubilee for mankind; and whose benediction of 'peace to this house' came upon it in 'the fulness of the blessing of the Gospel of peace.' And though the coming of such guests might be 'like angel visits, few and far between;' yet the hope of it would animate, and the recurrence richly reward all the efforts and duties of the hospitality of the intervening period.

Well would it have been for the Jewish nation, when Christ came to them, not in that form and with those pretensions which their minds had familiarly associated with the promised Messiah, but in a character which was, to their prejudices and hearts, *a stranger*, if they had entertained the consideration of his claims and doctrines, instead of at once rejecting him as an impostor. Strange as the office seemed to them, in his exposition of it, that was the true exposition, as was beautifully

proved by his character, as was sublimely exhibited in his works and resurrection, as was fearfully demonstrated in their judicial destruction. The lesson is a warning against what we may term mental inhospitality. It admonishes us never hastily to refuse admission to a tenet merely because it is a stranger to our previous notions. Had they received him, he would have been to them the angel of the covenant; a heavenly messenger, a celestial visitant, with a message infinitely more bright and blessed than any ever brought by winged forms, in robes of light, to the tents of patriarchs. How much is the progress of truth delayed in the world, by this summary mode of shutting the door of conviction against doctrines, because they are thought strange? When creeds have become corrupt, truth must have become strange. Paul's gospel was so, even to the Athenians, who had been all their lives luxuriating in the novelty they loved. And how little of the beauty and the power of truth can be evident on its first admission! The first Unitarians knew comparatively little of Unitarian Christianity; nor has its full lustre yet shone upon the world. How many of its bearings upon human intellect, human character, human improvement, human happiness, yet remain to be developed! What a dry and barren series of mere negations, and axiomatical propositions, does it still appear to many! 'I am tired,' said some one, 'of continually

fact, or principle, of mental or moral philosophy, which would have made a sage's name and fame, and secured his place among the lights of his age and country. In fulfilling the duty of combining with others for the achievement of some public measure for public good; in that occasional union with personal strangers, that co-operation of knowledge, zeal, and benevolence, by which liberty is gained for slaves, and restrictions on human rights are obliterated, and unjust laws are repealed, or just ones enacted, or religious information diffused over the face of a country; how often has it happened that public sympathy has been the occasion of private attachment, and friendships have sprung up, which have been a mutual and lasting blessing to the lives of both! When illness has caused a cessation from active pursuits, or when the heavy pressure of calamity has benumbed and crushed the mind, and recourse has been had to some new intellectual occupation, dallying with a history, a science, a language, a theory; merely, perhaps, for the purpose of disengaging the thoughts a brief while from depressing topics; how often has not only the first purpose been answered, but the individual been led on unawares, and found unexpected sources of activity, of enjoyment, of usefulness, blessings ten-fold to himself, and to others through his instrumentality! Partly, at least, we are indebted to the mental and bodily sufferings of

Cowper for his poetry; and to the deafness of Dr. Lardner for the 'Credibility of the Gospel History.' How often has the proper conduct of a child towards his parents, his filial respect and affection, his attention to their feelings, wants, wishes, and situation, his unwearied and lovely ministering to them in their infirmities, perhaps even their fretfulness, not only had its natural, and common, and sufficient recompense, but attracted notice in its unobtrusiveness, and, by the character it created in the minds of others, paved the way, even after the lapse of years, for his success in life, and raised him to a station which he might never else have attained! Sometimes an individual, accustomed to be thought for and acted for, is suddenly thrown into a lonely and difficult situation, requiring clearness of mind, promptness of decision, energy of conduct; and all the needful attributes spring up, and the new duties are strenuously discharged; and not only is the actual object gained, but by the attention, the admiration, the interest excited, some of earth's best social blessings flow in, like an unlooked-for spring-shower upon fields and gardens, making the heart's wilderness to blossom as the rose. O! there are stray gifts of God's goodness scattered over all earth's paths of duty; and what seem weeds give forth balm and fragrance to those who tread them with wounded feet and fainting senses. While immortal fruits grow on the tree of life, its shade is

the sweetest shelter; birds of Paradise sing among the branches, and 'its leaves are for the healing of the nations.'

But while we rejoice, when they do occur to ourselves or others, in these additional encouragements, these unlooked-for grants of goodness, these 'uncovenanted mercies,' these incidental and superabundant demonstrations of God's grace and love; let us remember that, without them, the obligations of goodness are perfect, the rewards of goodness are most ample. Duty is to be done, whether they come or not; and oftentimes they do not come. There may be even the apparent evil of additional and unexpected discouragements. Duty, whatever may be the present accompaniments or the immediate results, is the Christian principle. For the accessory delights, if we have them, let us thank our God, as Job did in his redoubled prosperity; but in utter destitution of them, let us still have his righteous confidence—'though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.' If good report proclaim our righteous efforts, let our ears drink in (though not too fondly) the pleasant music; but through evil report, with all its harshness, discordancy, and threats, let us hold on, unflinchingly. Though no angel ever came, the patriarchs yet beckoned in the fainting stranger, and welcomed him to their tent, and brought out the repast, and spread his couch. The duty had no contingency upon the miracle; nor

has any duty upon coincidences, which may be beautiful and delightful, but which are not certain, are not promised. There is enough which is certain, and is promised. Heaven hereafter, and its hope here, can do their work upon the heart and life without auxiliaries. They can arm for trials; sustain under calamities; and if the world be never friendly, why they will overcome the world. This is the true Christian spirit. It will go towards the heavenly city of its final abode and destination, as, at their great and appointed festivals, the Jews of old went towards Jerusalem. The command was to go—and they went. They went, whatever might be the length of the way or the state of the country. They rejoiced in going, if their procession moved on in peace, heaven above smiling on the loveliness of earth beneath, each village greeting them, and the husbandman leaving his plough, and the artisan his work, to join their band, and the winds wafting along the burden of the psalms they chanted, and the hills prolonging it with their echoes, till before them rose the temple, circled by Zion, the city of their God. But if storms howled above, and dreariness spread around, and terror had depopulated the villages, and hostile armies were in the way, and ever and anon the battle-cry was heard, and they moved with the bow strung and the sword unsheathed, still they went—went through tempest and conflict to Jerusalem. And thus goes

on, in the path of duty, the real Christian. Or even worse than this; be he alone, like Paul, bound on that same journey; some entreated him with tears; some prophesied menacing evils; friends beseeched; foes threatened; bonds and afflictions awaited him; but he went; and for his firm and faithful discharge of duty through perils, imprisonments, endurances of every varying character of gloom, and ultimate martyrdom, resplendent is his crown of glory in Christ's heavenly kingdom. Earthly good should ever be regarded as comparatively accidental; fidelity to God and conscience is the great essential. Our great Master and Saviour bends from his throne above to behold its struggles; and we hear his word of promise, 'Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.'

SERMON XII.

REJOICE EVERMORE.

I. THESSALONIANS v. 16.

'Rejoice evermore.'

A STATE of feeling cannot be produced or changed by mere volition. A man cannot rejoice or grieve by an act of the will, in obedience to a command. He can only do one of two things; adopt the outward expressions and manifestations, so far as they are capable of being voluntarily assumed; or employ such means as are subject to his control for the purpose of generating in his mind the state of feeling which is enjoined upon him. One of these courses must therefore be considered as enjoined by precepts like that just read. I should rather say the latter course must be intended; for so far as the first is not hypocrisy, (to which extent it could not be recommended by the apostle,) so far as it consists, for instance, of adopting when in sorrow, or having recourse to, those holy compositions expressive of the care, condescension, and love of our heavenly

Father, which tend to bring the mind into a calmer state, it may be resolved into the last; and is the employment of one species of means for generating the desired feeling. This, then, is the mode in which all precepts like the text—precepts which command, not a voluntary action, but a state of feeling—are to be interpreted and observed. They are an abbreviated form of enjoining all the proper voluntary means (which are not specified) for the production of the end, which is specified.

Could the text be obeyed by an immediate act of the will, who would not obey it? who would not be always rejoicing if he could? In this view, such injunctions are altogether nugatory; but in the other view, as commanding a certain set of voluntary actions, they are not nugatory, they are practical and important; and the only question is as to what means the apostle had in view, or Christianity contemplates, as those which, being employed, will realize the end here so briefly and imperatively indicated. These I shall endeavour to specify, *i. e.*, I shall endeavour to show by what voluntary acts the Christian may expect to advance towards a permanent state of cheerful or joyous feeling.

1st. *Habitual piety.* The very occupation of prayer tends to calm mental agitation, to soothe dejection and sorrow, to mitigate even the sense of bodily pain, and to steady the soul amid the tumultuousness of unexpected delight. As in a strong *consciousness* of the Divine presence all the distinc-

tions among men vanish; the mighty and the lowly appear on an equality; and even all created beings seem, by the effect of that overshadowing immensity, on the same level; so do events in like manner lose their disparities of magnitude and diversities of colouring, and take the one form and colour imparted to all, by the consideration, that they are His will and ordained in love. The very next precept to the text which the apostle gives is, 'Pray without ceasing.' Prayer makes us feel the Divine presence; the presence of a heavenly Father, and an Almighty friend. That presence must be consolation, strength, and joy. He who 'prays without ceasing' will 'rejoice evermore.' Habitual devotion, if Christian in its principles and spirit, tends to habitual cheerfulness. It does this even in the form of supplication. But Christian devotion does not more consist in prayer than in praise; nor so much. When the heart of the thoughtless or hardened transgressor is first touched with penitence, supplication may and must predominate, almost to the exclusion of thanksgiving. But as the spirit of the Gospel advances in its sway over his spirit, the proportion will change. His devotion will have in it comparatively more of gratitude and praise. From 'pray without ceasing,' the apostle immediately advances to the injunction, 'in everything give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.' And this alteration

in the proportion will go on with the progress of his soul, till the one is absorbed in the other altogether. The one is the language of fear, the other of love; and when love has grown to perfection, it will cast out fear. The tendency of devotion is to one single sentence, 'Thy will be done;' and to that, first submissively, and then rejoicingly. And if this require the largely-extended knowledge, the perfect holiness, and the thoroughly-harmonized feelings which the soul can only arrive at in the world to come, which world will therefore be one of joy for evermore; the cultivation of the devout habit here will yet, in its measure and proportion, be that of felicity also; and the permanently realized presence of God will be the permanently realized possession of a peaceful and rejoicing mind.

2nd. *Habitual activity.* This is also indicated by exhortations in the immediate connexion of the text. Paul tells the Thessalonians to prove all things; to esteem those who laboured among them; and themselves to warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and ever to follow that which is good, among themselves, and to all men. And these are good introductions and accompaniments to rejoicing evermore. There is a natural incongruity between rational and useful occupations, and mental depression, fretfulness, and wretchedness. The garments and the treasures that moth and rust corrode, are not those which are

in daily use, but those which are hoarded up, away from heaven's free air and man's employment and benefit. It is in the stagnation of thought and feeling that unwholesome fancies come over them, as on the surface of a pool, unsightly and poisonous. Let the free current flow, and by that free flowing it will purify, and brighten in the no longer intercepted sunbeam, and make sweet music in its course. Activity, honourable and useful activity, is the mind's proper condition, to depart from which outrages nature, which can never be outraged with impunity; and whose penalty, in this case, is a restless, dissatisfied, and troubled spirit. There is a moral lesson as well as a grammatical truth in distinguishing between words which signify doing and those which betoken suffering. The very *energy of endurance*, in sickness or other calamity, is an active principle; an intense and powerful one; bearing on to its object, it may be slowly, noiselessly, and imperceptibly, but uniformly and irresistibly. It makes every faculty, and every feeling, and every principle, do its duty, without parade but without cessation; and so the deepest despondency becomes confidence, and confidence generates a hope, in whose fulfilment, if not here, yet hereafter, the soul will rejoice evermore.

3rd. *Consistency in our expectations.* A large proportion of our suffering arises from disappointment; and a large proportion of our disappointment

arises from a faulty miscalculation, from expectations which were unreasonable. A just anticipation, an enlightened foresight, is one of the elements of the state of mind which the apostle contemplated; and this also we find in the chapter from which the text is taken; which contains indeed, incidentally, or by implication, the whole theory of our present subject. Judgments and calamities were approaching, on which unbelievers did not, but believers did, calculate. 'For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.' To be overwhelmed, prostrated, stunned, and crushed, by altogether unanticipated and unmitigated evil, may indeed happen to the most provident-minded man; but it is, to such, of the same comparative rarity as the eruption of a volcano, or the shock of an earthquake, in the material globe. In the course of nature, the succession of events, the conduct of others, a prudent man will not build upon chances. He will, so far as it is practicable, leave nothing contingent, either as to his outward circumstances, or even as to his inward feelings, upon lucky accidents. He will reckon upon the bursting of the storm from the time that he sees the clouds begin their gathering.

If Paul had much communication with Demas, so as to understand his character, it must have been without surprise, and with a grief of which the bitterness was almost destroyed by previous anticipation, that he wrote 'Demas hath forsaken me.' His reliance on Demas would have gone, before the trial came. If Pilate had rightly calculated on the turbulence, the meanness, the malignity, of the Jewish priesthood, he would not have had the innocent blood of Christ upon his conscience, in addition to his other vain attempts so to propitiate them as ultimately to escape having his conduct impeached and exposed by them at the imperial court. If Peter had only made a rational estimate of what was likely to happen to him when he followed Christ to the place of trial, he would either not have gone at all, or have gone with his mind prepared and fore-armed, and not have been surprised into the guilt of a perjured desertion, nor been plunged into the agonies of remorse. Paul, Pilate, Peter, might have known beforehand what was likely to happen in their several circumstances. There is no comparison between a calamity (at least generally, some kinds of calamity may be exceptions) which takes us by surprise, and one of which the idea has entered the imagination, of which the probability has been investigated and ascertained by the intellect, and to which, therefore, the feelings have been accommodated before its actual arrival.

This is what the apostle calls being 'children of light and of the day;' not sleeping, as did others, but watching and being sober. And thus was it in the matter to which he particularly referred, the coming destruction of Jerusalem. To the unbelieving Jews it was the very madness of misery: to the Christian Jews it was the fulfilment of a long and certain expectation, which they had looked at on every side and in all its bearings; by whom, therefore, most of its evils were avoided; on whom the inevitable portion of them fell with comparative lightness; and to whom there had gradually arisen associations with it of good, of hope, and of glory, that would naturally obtain at length in their minds a gladdening predominance. A just estimate of human character; a close observation of the ordinary course of providential events; the habit of investigating causes and effects in the moral world, the world of thought, feeling, and action; and a knowledge of our own minds and hearts; these will raise a man above many, though not all, of the disappointments that most embitter life: and by leading him only to feed his heart upon expectations which are likely to be realized, will do very much towards making him rejoice evermore.

4. *Command of the passions* is an essential ingredient in this cup of joy.

The etymological meaning of the word passion is suffering; in which sense our Lord's agony in the

garden, is called the passion of Christ. There is often much confusion in the use of this word, but for our present purpose the primary meaning of it is sufficient. It characterizes passion as something not properly belonging to us, but wrought upon us, doing us violence, by external agency. In this, passion is distinguished from affection, which is something wrought into our moral being, and thus becoming a permanent condition of our existence, and an active principle in our constitution. Passion and affection are relative terms, which should ever be applied with reference to the other qualities of individuals: the strength of emotion which in one person is passion, because in him it can only be produced by powerful external excitement, and is then too violent to be continuous, in another may rather require the epithet of affection, because the ampler development of his faculties, and the firmer construction of his entire character, not only enable him to bear it with impunity, but to prolong its duration with enjoyment and advantage. Permanent passion must either destroy the individual, or be fitlier called affection, according to the development, in that individual, of the intellectual and active powers, and the moral principles. By an impassioned character we often mean a character of strong feeling; but while the feeling is only strong in proportion to what others feel, and not in proportion to the general capacities of the character itself,

this involves none of the evils of unregulated passion. It has been said of such, that their affections are passions: we should rather say that their passions are affections. The affections are ministers of happiness; but passion is affection run riot. The most pleasurable emotions and feelings, when wrought up to that sudden violence which constitutes them passions, become painful. The paroxysm of joy has often been the agony of death. The darker passions, hatred, avarice, licentiousness, ambition, are totally and obviously inconsistent with a state of uniform enjoyment. They are the intense cravings after supposed gratification, which, when attained, only leaves disappointment, bitterness, remorse. Look at the effect of unrestrained passion carried into any of the particulars which have been enumerated as conditions of the blessing in the text. Devotion is transformed by passion into an agency of suffering; its character becomes enthusiastic and superstitious; it is debased by the alloy of earthly emotions; its even and heart-gladdening course is changed for an alternation of frantic fervours and dark despondency. The activity of passion is like the strength of madness; preternatural, misdirected, intermitting, followed by exhaustion, and full of mischief. The hopes of uncorrected passion, gorgeous in its own colouring, are sure to end in disappointment. Its expectations are of all the most inconsistent and unreasonable.

Happiness is not in sudden and strong sensations, violent emotions, fearful bursts of feeling; even though these sensations, emotions, feelings, may have in them no character of guilt, and even though their occasional occurrence may be coveted; they must still, though they should be momentarily blissful, be the rare miracles of life, not its daily successions of cause and effect. They may be things to meet with and remember, not to be provided for. The heart, like the household, should be set in order. It is only by the regular workings of the intellect and feelings that there can be a constant and pervading sense of joy. Pure, lasting, well-directed affections, are the sunshine of our path; which, if they do not burst upon us like the lightning, do not vanish like it either; and if they have not its glare and glory, have not, either, the prompt revulsion of the darkness by which it is followed. We are wisely, therefore, admonished in this chapter, that we should 'be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love: and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.'

5. *Habitual obedience to the dictates of conscience;* or, according to the apostolic directions which follow the text, holding fast that which is good, abstaining from even the appearance of evil, and preserving spirit, and soul, and body, blameless unto the coming of Christ.

What I call a good conscience, is the accordance

of our own conduct with our own rule of right. Without this there can be no self-respect; and he who forfeits that, has made a lamentable shipwreck. There is no rejoicing evermore for conscious degradation. When men wander from the standard of duty in search of happiness, they wander from happiness also, under the influence of self-delusion. The shortest and surest, indeed often the only way to joy the most elevated and enduring, is through that which is immediately painful. He mistakes who thinks to gain that object by hardening his heart and deadening his sympathies. Selfish joy is low in its nature, and brief in its duration. To enter with an acute sympathy into the sorrows of others; to weep with those that weep, as well as to rejoice with those that rejoice; to show the victims of unkindness, of misfortune, of oppression, and of all the various ills that flesh is heir to, that we have not only a mind to plan, and a hand to execute, but also a heart to feel for their calamities; this, though it be sometimes agonizing, is man's preparation for solid happiness, for it is that for which his Maker constituted him as he is, and placed him where he is. Its painfulness works out a pleasure beyond what cold selfishness, in its most successful avoidance of even the sight of misery, can ever attain. All habits or objects which may seem or be conducive to personal gratification, should be brought to this test. Whatever will not abide it

belongs not to the means of happiness—it will not endure.

6. *A mind which cherishes expanded and expanding views of God's dealings with his creatures;* a soul which, in Paul's language, is a child of light and of the day, not of night or darkness, is the final requisite. The more we understand of the Divine government, the more shall we be impressed with its wisdom and benignity; the more shall we rejoice that 'the Lord reigneth.' The clearer our mental vision, and the wider our mental horizon, the larger prospect shall we have of gladness and of glory. Intelligence must be an agency of happiness when, in all its diversified pursuits and operations, it is only doing one thing, which is 'to understand the loving kindness of the Lord.' As these religious views possess themselves of the soul, the gloom and pain excited by what is temporary become evanescent in the lustre of the good which alone is eternal, and shall be universal. If men would but exercise their minds upon the great plan of Providence, learning more and more of the principles on which it proceeds, the ways in which it works, the end to which it advances, how much of unhappiness, of disappointment, of despondency, would be precluded! There is nothing so practically beneficial, such a spring of hourly pleasure to the heart, as the growing enlightenment of the mind on the nature and tendency of the Divine dispensations. Indolent

ignorance is punished by the needless suffering occasioned by its own narrow notions. It is eminently true of religious 'knowledge,' that it is 'power,' power which purifies, and power which blesses. Evermore to see God in his works, to know what he does, and why he does it—is evermore to rejoice. And if this be far beyond our attainment here, as to the particular workings of the mighty machine, we yet may grasp the principle, cultivate an increasing sense of its truth and beauty, and increasing acquaintance with its applications, and thus approximate towards our final state of perfect knowledge and perfect enjoyment.

The means we have described were those which Paul and his fellow-apostles and disciples employed; and by which they succeeded, in spite of the most formidable array of external circumstances against them. They were men of prayer, habitual and fervent. Their activity was ceaseless. When Christ commissioned them, it was as if he had made 'the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers.' They went forth into all the earth, and made the Gospel proclamation universal as the shining of the stars of heaven, for there was 'no speech nor language where their voice was not heard.' No vain expectation buoyed them up, to plunge them afterwards in misery; they laid their account with toil, opposition, calumny, persecution, exile, chains, and death. Every passion and every

thought they compelled into subjection to Christ. They knew nothing but him, the crucified one. To live in all good conscience towards God and man, was that for which they exercised themselves. And they ever studied to know more of the unsearchable riches of God in Christ. They laid the foundation of principles, and then went on, and exhorted to go on, towards perfection. And with all their toils, and all their persecutions, they were happy men. Through all the painful records of the historical parts of the New Testament, and through all the arguments and controversies of its Epistles, there runs a spirit of calm rejoicing. They brought themselves even to 'glory in tribulation,' and the sorrow of the Christian is a 'sorrow not without hope.' They could do all things, through the Gospel of Christ which strengthened them; and in whatever external state they were, they learned therewith to be content. When the first martyr was borne away to death, his face was as the face of an angel. They sang their hymns of praise in prisons—they rejoiced in being thought worthy to suffer. The power of evil could go no farther against them—the baffled world, in its fury to work their woe, only saw them rejoicing, more and evermore.

Thus, then, not in undevout, irrational, animal pleasure; not in indolent repose; not in vain and fallacious reverie; not in tumultuous and unbridled

passions; not in the sacrifice of right feeling and right conduct; not in careless, superstitious, or slothful ignorance; but by a mind enlightened with God's truth, and observant of God's ways; a conscience void of offence; a hope pointing heavenwards and making not ashamed; feelings well cultivated and well directed; and love to God and man, showing itself in filial piety and active goodness; may we aim at, and, as far as earth's clouds and changes and our own infirmities will allow, advance towards, a state of conformity with the precept to rejoice evermore.

SERMON XIII.

MORAL INCONGRUITIES.

PROVERBS XXV. 20.

'As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart.'

BY these two similitudes, the proverb describes that aggravation of the suffering of an individual which is often occasioned by selfishness, or by mere heedlessness, or even by kindness, when tact and judgment are wanting in its manifestations. The first of them needs no explanation; and of the second, it may suffice to say that the substance called nitre was not that which the word designates with us, but an alkali, used in washing;—'wash me with nitre and I shall be clean;' the same thing as the Smyrna soap-earth; and pouring vinegar upon it would make it bubble, and effervesce, in a manner affording no unapt comparison for a state of annoyance and irritation. Such is his work who pours

gay ditties in a sorrowing ear. It implies a want of thought, of judgment, or of feeling; a deplorable want of thought if, when we are with persons in a state of suffering, we do not advert to the effect which our own behaviour may have upon them; a want of judgment, if we expect to change that state by showing a total absence of sympathy in it, or exhort them, as by an act of volition, to spring abruptly from grief to gladness, while gloom is pressing heavily upon their minds; and a want of feeling, if our own merriment be unrepressed by a sense of the painful contrast it must present to them, of its utter uncongeniality with their condition, and by all the other stirrings within the bosom of that disposition which impels to weep with them that weep, as well as to rejoice with them that rejoice.

When this evil arises from a want of feeling, it is only one symptom of a great moral disease which requires the concentrated and persevering attention of the individual for its correction. The man who is deficient in this, has a most important part of his nature undeveloped. He has to acquire some of the first principles of goodness. He *must* acquire them before he can ascend in the scale of moral excellence. The descriptions which one sometimes hears of very good people, but with not much feeling, of cold and crabbed Christians, are altogether incongruous and absurd. In religion and morality,

the faculties of the head and the heart are co-ordinate; they should both be diligently cultivated, and their growth and expansion should be proportionate. The men who have done great things in the world; who have raised large classes of their fellow-creatures from suffering and degradation; who have abolished miseries; the moral heroes who have slain the monsters that ravaged cities and made earth a wilderness; while they have been distinguished from others by the clearness of their intellect, and the activity of their lives, have been not less elevated above them by the fervour of their feelings. They were men whose imaginations realized the peculiar kind of suffering which it was their destiny to remove or alleviate, with more than the sculptor's distinctness of form, with more than the painter's vividness of colouring, with more than the poet's abundance of associated recollections and emotions. Such men as Howard and Clarkson had visions of the agonies of slaves and prisoners which haunted their imaginations, which tortured their sympathies, which quickened their minds to almost preternatural acuteness, which drove them forth to the work allotted them by Providence, saying, after their Master, 'I have a baptism wherewith to be baptized, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!' And what is true of those distinguished individuals, holds also of circumstances less peculiar, and of characters less conspicuous.

An imagination accustomed strongly to realize the good and evil of others, is as essential to virtue as an intellect stored with sound principles, and active powers in their best state for exertion. There is a physical provision for sympathy in the human constitution, as well as the material apparatus for thought and for motion. Like them, it should be employed, and cultivated, and refined, and exalted. With that, and with them, 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual.' But in all, the one grows out of the other; and the seed intimates what the harvest will be, when man shall attain the full perfection of his nature.

Where the evil mentioned in the text is only the want of thought, of attention, of reflection, it has a speedier remedy. To see the uncongeniality is often to remove it. Joy needs a response as well as grief; and is checked by the absence of sympathy which aggravates the other. Those who are compelled to say, 'We have piped to you, and ye have not danced—we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept,' will sooner leave off piping than leave off mourning. The song must lighten the heavy heart or become itself a dirge. There would be a way of stilling the acclamations of a multitude; even while shouting over the victory which had driven the enemy from their gates, and saved their city from storm and pillage; the rude, untutored multitude,

in all the intoxication of their triumph, and the blaze of their illuminations; let but the mourners pass by, whose dearest ones have fallen in the fight, and left them desolate amid the common joy; and hushed voices, subdued looks, and even answering tears, will acknowledge their presence, and do homage to their sorrows. Some one wrote a book in illustration of the harmonies of nature—and nature is abundant in harmonies, and intolerant of incongruities; nor, unless perverted and corrupted by the grossest selfishness, will man's moral nature endure the incongruity of manifest pleasure in the presence of anguish.

And the pain with which one witnesses any thing of this kind extends not only to the particular instance mentioned in the text, but to a variety of other cases, of which I shall specify some, coming under the same general description of an incongruity between the feelings of the individual, and the relative position in which he stands towards others.

And the first instance which naturally occurs is the incongruity which there is reason to apprehend exists too frequently between the thoughts and emotions which occupy individuals in a place of worship, and those which alone accord with the purposes for which we here assemble.

To come here—here where God, the infinite and omniscient spirit, should have his presence peculiarly felt by the reference of all that passes to his

will and service; here, where in supplication and praise we invoke his hallowed name, and profess directly to address ourselves to the eternal Majesty of heaven and earth; here, where transgression is confessed, and weakness is acknowledged, and pardon is sought, and strength is supplicated, and mercies are sung in hymns of thanksgiving, and desires and hopes are breathed forth from the heart's fulness; here, where we read that pure, and powerful, and varied, and everlasting word of God, that living word, by which our Father speaks to his children in their difficulties and their temptations, their sorrows and their exertions, with all a Father's wisdom and love; here, where though we have this treasure in earthen vessels—the excellence being in itself and its Author, and only obscured by the imperfect ministration which presents it to you—yet that ministration relates to highest and holiest truth, to the soul, and goodness, and God, and immortal being, and heavenly happiness; here, where the young come that they may be prepared for life, and the aged that they may be prepared for death, and the teachable that they may be taught, and the sorrowful that they may be comforted, and the rich and the poor meet together in the equality of humanity, to cherish the love of brotherhood; to come here, in a spirit of levity, or of indifference, or out of mere form and habit, or regarding it as a sort of sober amusement, or to be

making a censorious application to others—O this is worse than pouring vinegar upon nitre, or singing songs to a heavy heart! If there be such, let the thought of what is passing in others' minds, in the penitent, the mourning, the inquiring, the devout, shame your own into seriousness and contrition. At least, let your souls here recognize His presence who is always present. It can be only required for you to perceive and feel the incongruity of your feelings, for them to change to a more becoming character. Think of this discrepancy. Think of all that should occupy your minds and hearts. The hopes of heaven, the duties of earth, the relations of humanity, will then rise upon your imaginations; your emotions will have a growing accordance with the occupations and objects of the place and time; you will worship, you will learn, you will love; you will feel the holy pleasure, and reap the spiritual profit, the experience of which makes us glad when they say, 'Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord.' You will say, 'Truly, God is here, and I knew it not; this is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of Heaven.'

Another case of this incongruity, and which is very like singing songs to heavy hearts, is that of young persons who neglect that improvement of the opportunities of youth, which should form their minds and characters for future respectability, worth, usefulness, and comfort; and by giving

themselves up to idleness, pleasure, and frivolity, grieve their relatives, friends, and all who are interested, either in them personally, or generally, in the well-being of the rising generation, and through that, of the generations that are to follow after, and carry on or retard the progress of the human race.

I am no advocate for a premature gravity. I do not want to see the young affecting the manners of the aged, or of the mature. I only want them to remember, and that to good purpose, that they will arrive at maturity; and, should Providence spare them, to age; and that Autumn brings no harvest for him who in spring time has only frolicked in the sunshine, played with the blossoms, and sung with the birds. Youth is the season of pleasure and hope; and be it so; but the pleasure ought not to be altogether unworthy of a being of rationality, nor the hope to stop infinitely short of the prospects of an heir of immortality. How is it that there are so many, who, as they advance in life, do not advance in moral worth, in useful influence, or even in personal enjoyment? There should be, and there might be, an harmonious progress. The improveability of a character throughout the whole of our mortal being depends materially upon what is done at that critical time when the boy passes into the man. He then opens, or seals up, the fountains whose ever-flowing and expanding streams should refresh him through all the wildernesses of life.

He has then opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and for framing his faculties to habits of activity, which will never occur again. It is sad to think of him, as so trifling away that period, that his resources will be ever diminishing; that, if he shall possess wealth, it will only minister to animal indulgences, or the gratification of vanity; that, if his situation shall confer influence, that influence will have no enlightened and beneficent aim; that the faculty of constant improvement, the dearest blessing of the highest minds, will in him have become defunct; that years hence he will only be living in the worthless present; that the intellect of the age will pass him by; that when he is old, there will be nothing in him, for which the young, who shall then be, will seek his society, and treasure his sayings, and crave his guidance, and desire his approbation, and do him reverence in their hearts. Look forward, look forward, youth of this congregation; and redeem some time to prepare for coming time, for a coming eternity. Train your intellects to diligent exercise and useful acquisition; and your feelings to devotional acts, and kindly charities; read, study, reflect, contemplate the end for which God created you, and determine on its realization. This is to have your feelings in harmony with your age and circumstances. On you depend the destinies of the next generation. Why is the mighty, the immeasurable power of early

education, of so little avail in the world? To what might not children be trained? To what purity, independence, energy, and loftiness of thought and purpose? Why are they not? Because those who should train them are inefficient. The teachers, the first and natural teachers, are themselves untaught. The father learned Latin at school, which is forgotten in his business; and the mother accomplishments, which are obsolete in the household. The future parents should be prepared to be the formers of their children's minds and hearts, to the ardent love and active pursuit of truth and goodness; and when they delegate the task, should know what to require of the professional instructor. Only then will education become a rational and Christian training, for duty, excellence and happiness; and not the flimsy work of vanity, fashion, and worldliness, that it now too often is. There are too many of the young who make one's heart heavy for futurity. Happily there are others. And when I see a youth who, even in his boyhood, discerns between the solid and the conventional in the instruction offered him, and applies most vigorously to the former; who passes with ease and grace from the temporary equality of rank in school, to his own perhaps humbler position in the diversities yet kept up in actual life; who learns, in principle and not in spite, that honest industry is ever honourable; and well to fill an useful situa-

tion, the noblest of all nobility; who diligently avails himself of every opportunity for enlarging his mind and his knowledge, and even cultivating his taste, neglecting nothing which God has given him for good, and life yields of pure enjoyment; whom it is a pleasure to preach to, because he is bent on comprehending and judging the principle, the aim, the tendency of a discourse, and appreciates and feels the harmonious influence of a religious service, and does not merely listen to pick up a few isolated sentences, to hear some few truisms repeated, which he calls religious knowledge, and sit in complacent judgment on what he is too indolent to analyze; who is ever grateful for advantage, and on the alert for improvement, and interested in all that ought to interest the man, the citizen, and the Christian: I see one whose feelings accord now with his position and relations; and will accord with them hereafter, when they shall have expanded and elevated themselves; with whom youth is a preparation for manhood; and life a preparation for immortality; and this world a preparation for the eternal kingdom of God in heaven. May the portrait have many originals! They who best deserve it, now and ever, think themselves 'not already to have attained, neither to be already perfect, but leaving the things which are behind, press onward to those which are before.'

Again; I remark this incongruity of feeling in

those whose situations are so far raised as to entitle them to be classed amongst, at least, the comparatively affluent and influential members of society, but who do not turn this power to the benevolent account which Christianity demands of those entrusted with such a stewardship. It is too often the case, and it is especially the prevailing mistake, or rather vice, of this country, that a man so circumstanced feels himself a member of a class or order. His sympathies are drawn towards those who have like or greater advantages, and alienated from those who are destitute of them. Towards them he displays either a supercilious compassion, or a timorous apprehensiveness. He seems to regard the rich and the poor as natural enemies; and the poor as ever ready to plunder the rich, unless they can keep them down. Now I do not mean to represent this as altogether chimerical. Till the many have more education, generating in them higher moral principle, and their condition be one of much more enjoyment, there will be something of this to be apprehended by the few in whose hands the advantages of society are accumulated. But then, where is the cure? Where, but in those who are better off, feeling in the way which their position requires of them? Instead of an unintellectual and indolent enjoyment of their superiority, they should never rest till the whole mass is raised as near the same level as it can be raised. There

is nothing impracticable or ridiculous in universal education. There is no reason why the producers of wealth should not share more largely in the distribution of wealth. The majority must be the base of the social pyramid; but there is no reason why its foundations should be laid in ignorance and wretchedness. The feeling which accords, in the harmony of the universe, with the condition of the rich, the enlightened, the good, is to better the state of the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious. It is the work which God has given them to do; which Christianity commands, to which sympathy impels. What a happy world this might be made, if the immense resources in it for human enjoyment were but wisely directed to common advantage, instead of being perverted to the ministry of exclusive claims and gratifications! How can men sing their songs amid so many heavy hearts? May God excite that clear conviction and strong desire of what society ought to do for all its children, which shall realize the ends of social existence, and leave not even its lowest members to the want, ignorance, privations, and abandonment of almost savage life.

Through many more illustrations might this subject be pursued. One I must just mention. By the corruptions of men, the Gospel itself, that noblest strain of 'Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men,' has been made an uncongenial and insulting song of

exclusive privilege, making sad those whom the Lord hath not made sad. Religion has been put in the position which the proverb condemns. Foul perversion of 'the glad tidings of great joy to all people!' It has been like one 'taking away a garment in cold weather;' robbing men even of the hopes and consolations of natural religion, and representing millions of them as having perished in exposure to a storm of divine wrath, and reprobation, from which there was for them no shelter. It has 'poured vinegar upon nitre,' and made the doctrine that should purify the heart and life, a noisy and profitless ebullition of bigoted hearts and clamorous tongues. It has sung of elective love, and exclusive heaven, to the heavy, because humble hearted, who dared not appropriate the confident boasts of spiritual presumption. The tree is known by its fruits. 'The wisdom which cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.'

When sympathy has erred and aggravated sorrow by touching a note of uncongenial lightness, it will soon rectify the mistake, and atone for it by modulations which will charm the soul from its sadness, as the demon of Saul felt the power of the harp of David. The expression thus viewed becomes a description of beneficent power. Accordingly it is a metaphor which in some cases has been

actually and commonly employed, and in others may be, to designate the influences by which the good and great have blessed their fellow-creatures; whether by divine inspiration, or only the inspiration, which is also divine, of genius, or of benevolence. The first civilizers of mankind are fabled to have been musicians. Their instrument was the human heart; their harmonies those of human affections. By these they built up savage men into the living temple of social order. Thus was it that wild beasts grew tame at the lute of Orpheus, and the ponderous rocks became instinct with voluntary movement, till there arose the walls and towers, and streets, and palaces, of mighty cities. The Jewish prophets sung their songs to heavy hearts by the waters of Babylon; mournful was the accompaniment of those harps which hung on the willows of the Euphrates; but the dejected spirit of Israel at length revived; there was hope in the captivity; and to that Jerusalem, which they vowed never to forget, the exiles at length returned, and built again the temple of the Lord. To the sick, the maimed, the blind, the perishing, in all their heavy sadness, how like a strain of music on the ear must have come the voice of Christ, with tenderness to touch, with sympathy to win confidence, with animation to enliven. 'Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee, rise up and walk.' 'Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will

give you rest.' And so came the words of his Apostles to the bewildered inquirer, 'feeling after God if haply he may find him;' to the burdened ceremonialist, working out a righteousness by the ritual law with heartless toil; to the desponding sinner, and the slave of the dread of death. Christian joys and hopes came to them tempered by the human sympathy of those ministers of reconciliation, and adapted themselves to each particular case, showing that, while the heart knew its own bitterness, the gospel, or its Author rather, knew it too, and had provided for it that precious gift of spiritual healing. And so works the gospel now, by him who in its spirit would console, on him who in his calamity needs that consolation. It commences a change of feeling by sympathy in the feeling which is to be changed; and the unison thus established holds on till the strain becomes one of resignation, peace, and hope. And if we love mankind; and if we realize the accumulated and complicated mass of misery which there is in the world; and, on the other hand, the capability of that world to generate happiness, and of man to enjoy it; our hearts must often be heavy within us at that sad contrast. But then hope singeth her songs of futurity, which philosophy has learned of experience, and prophecy shadowed forth by inspiration, and Providence will accomplish in the latter days. We listen, and our hearts are lightened. We are

strengthened to go on sowing the good seed, of which future times shall reap the fruit. We may be prophesying in sackcloth, but we remain faithful witnesses for God, truth, and providence, and bear our testimony.

O happy are they, the dead, that died in the Lord, and who live in heaven; to whom the ways of God are no longer mysterious; who, in the light of his presence, see 'the end from the beginning;' unobstructed by the intervening clouds that darken our lower path. Could their songs of unmingled delight burst upon our mortal ears, they might jar our heavy hearts. In the depressions and bewilderments, the anxieties and despondings of our earthly life, that clear strain of joy would be uncongenial and incongruous. But we hear it not *till death*, and then increasing knowledge of the works and ways of God will soon win for it the full accordance of our immortal sympathies. Then we too shall sing 'the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest.' And from all that exists, shall we hear the glad response to our own hearts' eternal song of praise and thanksgiving.

SERMON XIV.

ELEVATION OF SENTIMENT.

COLOSSIANS iii. 1.

" If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

WITH a mixture, which is not uncommon in the most celebrated writers, of the literal and the figurative, the apostle here enforces on Christians that they should cultivate an habitual elevation of sentiment as a consequence of that moral resurrection from the death of trespasses and sins, which had been wrought in them by knowledge of the fact of Christ's resurrection from the grave. The allusive or figurative, and the literal expression, are equally appropriate and intelligible, and there is a harmony in this intermingling and seeming confusion, which not unaptly applies to the subject. The material and the mental, the natural and the supernatural, do admirably mingle in the plans of God, and the influences of religion, and the manifold operations

by which man is trained into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. One continually grows out of another, or acts by another; and they all 'work together for good.' They have a common ultimate object, the happiness of man in the full development and infinite progressiveness of his nature. For this, his bodily frame has its peculiar construction. The physical powers of other animals cannot build up intelligence in them, as do the eye, ear, hand, nerves, and brain in man. These have the same purpose and tendency as the wisdom of philosophers and the oracles of inspiration, the miracles of Moses and of Christ. A miracle is a stimulus to reason, and a suggestion of natural truth. The ascertaining a principle in metaphysical science is sometimes, as in the theory of causation, the clearing up of a doctrine of revelation. The regions of knowledge, like the kingdoms of the earth, however distant may seem their territories, have a continual interchange going on of their productions, and in various modes are made subservient to a common object. Each seems to become, in its results, universal and infinite, and the character of each is that of all, and of their countless combinations. The revival of Christ is a bare physical fact. A certain portion of organized matter passed out of one state into another state. Yet when should we come to an end of enumerating the influences of that fact? It is the keystone of Jewish history.

It binds together into a whole the extraordinary narrative which begins with the call of Abraham or the mission of Moses, and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. To both events, and all that intervene, it gives meaning and unity. That bare physical fact illustrates the character and designs of the pure and infinite Spirit. It reveals God, as the Almighty and the All-loving. Look at it in its effect on the speculations of philosophers; it solved the most difficult question in which they had entangled themselves, and the most deeply interesting. It superseded their conflicting arguments on the destiny of man, and made historical fact banish metaphysical doubt. See its political bearing; how large a portion it has coloured of the broad surface of the stream of time. On theory and practice, mind and manners, private life and public history, the past and the future, how illimitable are its influences! And then again each single point on which it bears has itself also a like infinity. If the poet aims to make his verse an echo to the sense, whether he describe natural objects, or human actions, well may the language of the religious teacher unintentionally assume a mingled character, in discoursing of these vast interchanges of physical, intellectual, social, moral and spiritual influences, and even an apostle blend the mention of a material and a moral resurrection; of noble principles, and elevated space; of the right

hand of majesty, and the influence of truth and love, by which Christ reigns in the power of God; and so mingling them exhort, 'If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.'

The spirit of this exhortation I take to be, that it becomes the Christian to cultivate a moral elevation of sentiment, feeling, desire, or character. And I shall endeavour to show in what such elevation consists, and how it is promoted by Christianity generally, and in particular by the fact of the resurrection of Christ.

The very terms *elevation of sentiment*, &c., are apt to excite in some minds notions of affectation, cant, and hypocrisy, of turgid language, exaggerated emotion, and extravagant assumption. But this is a gross perversion or mistake; the ridicule perhaps which might be due to the counterfeit, fixing itself on the reality, and bringing the very name into disgrace. All real elevation is characterised by simplicity. There is no true dignity but with simplicity and sincerity. All scientific knowledge leads up to principles characterized not less by their simplicity than by their comprehensiveness. All greatness of intellect tends to express itself in a style characterized by simplicity. The refinement of taste is a progress towards simplicity. The power of art is in the combination of simple elements on simple principles. The greatest opera-

tions and the noblest forms of nature are distinguished by simplicity. And such must be the characteristic of the loftiest moral character. It is 'the double-minded man' that is 'unstable in all his ways:' energy is the attribute, and success the frequent reward, of singleness of heart and of aim, of feeling and of purpose. With whatever qualities he may be gifted, a crooked politician can never be a great statesman. Chicanery and double dealing are mean and little, from the tricks of imperial diplomacy to those of the pettiest trade. All great philanthropists are simple characters; Howard was. All great philosophers are simple; Locke and Newton were. All great deliverers of nations are simple characters; Washington was. The affinities of evil are with complexity, and those of good with simplicity. Of the Apostles, Judas was the most complex character, and John the most simple. It is when the eye is single that the whole body is full of light. Here is a line in which every one may seek the things which are above. It is a path open to all stations, like heaven; from the highest elevations or deepest valleys of society. When Christ ascended from the earth, it was from the lofty mountain-top of Olivet; when he rose from the dead, it was from the lowly sepulchre in the garden of the Arimathean. Alike easy from each was his upward course towards the right hand of the Majesty on high. Were there a class of persons in society who, by

some peculiar moral training, could bring themselves to, and maintain themselves in, a high degree of simplicity and sincerity, their moral power would be without a rival. The tongue of bigotry would falter in attempting to anathematize them; political faction would quail and shrink from conflict with them; wealth would feel its purse-proud heart sinking, and blush for its comparatively worthless accumulation; the lustre of the coronet would grow dim, and the ermine be a mere covering. 'Let your yea be yea, and your nay nay,' is a precept that raises in its observance the Christian towards the Deity, to whose dignity it belongs, that his 'promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus;' the sublime simplicity of eternal truth.

O it is sad to see how many there are who understand not this—whose lives are a vain effort to make a false impression; who are ever aiming to produce an exaggerated notion of their talents, or their acquirements, or their connexions, or their influence in society, or their possessions, or of something or other, which they are not, or have not! These are the little turmoils of little souls. They have a false notion of greatness. It is within their grasp, but instead of looking up to simplicity of character, they look down to trickery, and entangle themselves in a maze, and fritter life away, offering false appearances to procure false opinion, and sowing the wind, to reap the whirlwind. They miss

the first element of moral greatness, without which there is no real greatness.

In religion, what mistakes have ever been made about elevation of sentiment! and how low are many notions of being 'above the world!' There were saints, as they were called, who planted themselves on the top of pillars and pinnacles, as if physical height were the object desired, and they were thereby so much nearer heaven. Others identified elevation of feeling with abasement of external condition, and because there were those who idolized riches, made vows of voluntary poverty, and with a falser moral taste than even that of the unjust steward who could not dig and to beg was ashamed, they would not dig, and to beg were not ashamed, but proud. Others thought it high and great to sever all natural ties and affections, and called denuding their souls of what makes the soul a rich and glorious thing, a devoting of it to God. These follies of past days are not passed away; they survive amongst us, though in varied forms. What now are elevated sentiments in religion, with one class? Abstruse meditation on the abstruse propositions which they call religion. Sublimity to them is the splitting of a hair, the right division of the mathematical point which parts the one true faith from all the deadly heresies. And when are others on their pleasant mountains and in sight of the celestial city, but when an excited state of the animal

system gives them something like the delirious joy of fever, and they hear Christ whispering to them the assurance of salvation, and forget all realities in visions of angels, thrones, and temples. And what is the elevation of a much soberer class of religionists, but simply mental occupation on what they deem peculiarly religious topics, on God and the Bible, prayer and praise, death and judgment, heaven and hell? Now the fact is that elevation of sentiment in religion can only be shown, distinctly and satisfactorily, in relation to the things which are around us, not in abstraction from them or hostility towards them. Christ intimated his disciples being above the world while *in* the world. *He* walks not with God who walks away from the works of God, in which God lives, into the region of his own unsubstantial fancies and fruitless reveries. The man who could only worship at an altar of stone had a lower spirit of piety than he who could kneel on the mountain, by the stream, in the upper room of an house, or in the deep, dark dungeon. The prophet who prayed looking towards Jerusalem had a narrower soul than that better prophet who prayed looking up to heaven. True piety is not the distinct work of a distinct faculty of the mind, but the upward direction of all its faculties, and the perfection thereby of all its thoughts, emotions, and pursuits. One man seeks things which are above: how? he shuts himself up in a

cloister, and repeats words, with sacred names often intermingling therein. Another seeks the things which are above: how? he goes amongst men, in their daily avocations, and he promotes their loving one another as brethren, inasmuch as God hath made of one blood all nations of men. That is Christian elevation. Christ only stood on a pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem in a vision of diabolical temptation: it was when, in reality, he stood in the streets of Jerusalem, and his voice of meek wisdom was heard winning sinners to penitence and healing the diseased, that the son of man was in heaven, and in the bosom of his Father. He then built himself a lofty monument in men's memories and hearts which should stand when of all the towers and turrets of the temple, and of that pile of isolated and ceremonial piety which it symbolized, not one stone should be left upon another. In religion, nicety of creed is not elevation of sentiment: enthusiastic fervour of emotion is not elevation of sentiment: occupation in ceremonial forms and actions is not elevation of sentiment: abstraction from the concerns of life and the interests of humanity is not elevation of sentiment: Christ sitteth at the right hand of God in the progressive attainment of universal knowledge, the feeling of universal sympathy, the exercise of universal influence, and the contemplation of universal love, the love which creates and regulates to bless; and in

aspiring from our lowlier sphere towards such a state we are truly seeking the things which are above.

In society, in professions and occupations, in literature, in men's views of civil institutions, there is much mistake about that in which refined and elevated sentiment consists. In old language, morals and manners were identical, and it is a false refinement by which they are separated. The only real politeness is that of benevolence, giving no pain which can be avoided even in the veriest trifles, save where the sacrifice of truth would be involved. To affect more than this, and call it an elevation of the tone of society, is miscalling a descent into the regions of artifice, selfishness, hollowness, and malignity. So the boasted 'good people,' yet whose manners so often hurt and wound, might reasonably question their own hearts and minds. There can never be bad taste, or lack of refinement, so as to annoy, in a pure and intelligent benevolence. A high sense of honour is often a very low thing; beneath, not above, what goes by the humbler name of morality. It injures the defenceless, and makes life the sport of folly, without a blush. 'Rising in society' is not a moral ascension. It is only getting above one sphere of attraction to be influenced by another, where there is still the principle of gravitation, drawing downward, downward still. There can be no elevation of thought, feeling, or character,

among the luxuriously idle, whose only business is pleasure. Then how absurd are the distinctions of trade and profession, when they pass beyond the bounds of mere description, and become indications of respect or contempt. We owe to the associations which weakness and vanity have hung around these distinctions a world of servility, sycophancy, and mental prostitution. We owe to the same cause the corruption of many pure hearts and noble minds. It has been the bane of Christian verity in the church, of political integrity in the senate, of easy and even justice in tribunals, and of frank and manly intercourse in society. The little pride of dissent has consecrated a folly of this class. There is a sort of prescriptive restriction on its ministers of combining any avocation with their stated duties except that of teachers of youth. This prevails among most of those who assume to be the respectable dissenters, and has even found its way into the allotment of their legal privileges. Now between preaching to adults and educating youth there is very little real affinity. The modes of instruction are as different as the ages of those to be instructed. Excellence in either may be, and very commonly is, the companion of gross defectiveness as to the other. In fact they mutually tend to produce unfitness. He must be a very extraordinary man indeed who does not become a worse preacher in the same proportion as he grows a better schoolmaster; or a less

efficient schoolmaster by the cultivation of the peculiar faculties which render him a more impressive and useful preacher. There are very many other avocations which would harmonize far better with either than they do with each other. But most of all do the false and the true elevation of sentiment part company in the mode of our regarding social institutions. There the one delights in privilege; the other seeks common good. There the one would exalt the few, proportionately, or rather disproportionately; the other would raise the many absolutely. In the affairs of communities, elevated sentiment regards the lowest and largest class. Priestley was an example of the one, and Burke of the other; and the former originated the expression of 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number;' while the latter was looking up to the turrets of a feudal castle, with the silken banner floating above them. In taste, manners, morals, society, politics; in all the affairs of life, all the world over, the real refinement and elevation, the real aspirations after the things which are above, must be found in the simplicity of wisdom and benevolence, going straight forward to the true, the good, the useful,—living in love, which is to live in God, and be in heaven already. That is the true rising of the soul above the world, which looks down with no cold or contemptuous gaze, but draws the world upward and onward too. It is a contemplation of

the future, with no deadness to the present, but which irradiates the present with the coming brightness of futurity.

I said that this elevation of feeling was promoted by Christianity, considered generally; and by its great and leading fact, the resurrection of Christ, in particular.

It is promoted by Christianity generally. Look at its vehicle, that glorious book, the Bible. What a magnificent collection it is! There, indeed, is something for the mind to grapple with, either in logic, in learning, or in imagination. How it tramples under foot all the technicalities of pedantic art, and all the petty finicalities and squeamishnesses of false delicacy of taste, that cannot bear heaven's wind to blow upon it! There is the proper food for a rich, and vigorous, and universal intellect. Hark to the songs of its bards; those bards who were also statesmen, warriors, chieftains, reformers: how they peal on the ear, echoing the cherubim and seraphim who continually cry, 'Holy, holy, holy Lord God Almighty!' Look at its narrative, its wonderful narrative, which reads like all other history idealized, and the hand of God made visible, guiding the revolutions of this diurnal sphere; while yet it is full of lessons of practical wisdom for every where and every day. Look at the origin of the gospel: provincial, and yet to change the destiny of the empire of the world: Jewish, and yet to impose a

new devotion on the philosophic spirits of Greece, and the warlike lords of Rome. Its messengers, peasants and fishermen; its first converts, the people, the mere people, the despised people; but its badge to be borne on banners and surmount the proudest diadems. No pomp of oratory, or patronage of power, marshalled its way; but its herald was 'the voice of one crying in the wilderness.' How love sprung forth amid dissension, and levelled the barriers of her birth place! How sublimer virtues than the world had known became the common qualities of common people! Publicans and sinners rose into saints and martyrs. The world was abashed, and bowed before things which were above it. And there was the proclamation of its mighty doctrines, of God's impartiality, and man's fraternity and equality, and the essentiality of holiness alone, and judgment, and restoration. And there were its precepts of the 'love which fulfils the law.' And can we enter into the spirit of all this, yet rest in the little trickery, and vain enthusiasm, and false estimates, that affect to soar but only crawl? This is a book to make man look up to heaven, and derive from heaven feelings which exalt his nature, and bless his species. This is the spirit which the world needs, for the world's redemption. 'The spirit of glory and of God is upon you,' said an apostle; and as our religion is understood and felt, it worketh mightily, and 'the wilderness, and the

solitary place shall be made glad, and the desert rejoice, and blossom as the rose.'

The world celebrates, to-day, Christ's resurrection. Would that the world felt the full power of that resurrection! There was one, unschooled in adventitious forms, but grace was on his lips, and he moved in all the gentleness of love. Would that his vain adorers better knew the carpenter's son of Nazareth! That good shepherd would hear of no outcasts from his fold, and for its common good he laid down his life. He felt that he was himself a better temple to the Lord, than that which Solomon built, or that which Herod adorned. 'In him there was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth.' He came into the world, and he loved the world, and he died for the world, and yet the while he was in heaven, and abode with the Father. His heart was ever with God. And he arose from the dead. Perfect humanity accomplished its glorious destiny. Then were gathered the first fruits of them that slept. From that darkness sprung up new light, from that grave a new life. *We* are risen with Christ, therefore, to seek things which are above. To be of him, is to have the purity, refinement, elevation of soul which has been described. 'We walk in newness of life with Christ Jesus.' We have another world in prospect, but which blends harmoniously with this, making the production of goodness and happiness the great end of both. Our

immortality is not an alienation from earthly and social utility, but its best source and stimulus. If genuine Christians are separated by their elevation, it is that they may raise the rest. The first fruits do but harbinger the harvest. Not as an isolated dream, but as an all-pervading principle, may we cultivate that 'spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace.' So shall we rise with Christ from the grave of coldness, inertness, and corruption; and ascend with him to the heaven of light and love; that heaven which bends over all benignantly, and, in its elevation, is simple, majestic, universal, and everlasting.

SERMON XV.

SUBORNATION OF INSINCERITY.

---

2 John 4.

'I rejoiced greatly when I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father.'

Who does not profess to admire and love sincerity? It is the theme of universal eulogy, and very deservedly so, and in a certain sense very honestly so; for those who have no intention of practising it themselves, yet perceive that in many points it would be very convenient to them that it should be practised by others, and so it has their hearty recommendation. And yet with all this praise there is, perhaps, not another virtue with which society deals so harshly. We have heard of political virtues being expiated on the scaffold, but perfect sincerity would subject its possessor to a living martyrdom, which would endure from childhood to old age. As a Christian grace, certain is its crown of glory hereafter; but not less certain is its crown of thorns

here. Its way to immortality is by a crucifixion. It is true, that notwithstanding these external inflictions, it may have internal sources of consolation and strength. That is only saying that the wisdom of Providence may counteract the folly of man. It is no merit of theirs who hedge-up the straightforward path, and would, if they could, make the fence an insurmountable barrier: they are quite as culpable as if they were completely successful; and that culpability is not trifling. We have no slight responsibility in this matter. It ought to weigh heavily on a man's conscience, if he have been the cause of another's deviating from sincerity and frankness into the crooked ways of concealment and guile. When we pray that the kingdom of God may come, we mean that it should come in other's hearts as well as in our own: our duty is not to obstruct it anywhere. It is no justification of repressing a virtue in others that we practise it ourselves. If, for instance, we plume ourselves upon speaking out our own opinions, but do it in a manner so violent and overbearing that we drive others into the suppression of their honest convictions, it may be that we do as much harm by the fervour as benefit by the frankness. Our sincerity is not good, in so far as to another it becomes the stimulus to insincerity. It was often remarked, when attempts were making to rouse the sympathies of the people of this country in favour of the Greeks,

that the character of their Turkish masters was one which might be regarded with much greater moral complacency; that the Turk was manly, open, truthful in his language, but the Greek cunning, deceptive, fraudulent. Now the same thing might be said of oppressors and slaves all over the world. Why should *they* practise acts of cunning who have nothing to apprehend, or resort to fraud who can use force with impunity? The vices of slaves are generated by the condition of slavery. The frankness of the tyrant arises not from the love of truth, but from the sense of power: he keeps down truth in his bondsmen; he is guilty in their degradation—for the cause of their insincerity is in his oppressions; and if it were not by oppression, but by bribery, by persuasion, by talking, by legislation, by influence, by church government, or in any other way, he would be guilty still. This is the evil against which I warn you. I am not now preaching against *the practice of insincerity*, but the promotion of insincerity. I wish you to heed the distinction. You may be very sincere, and yet do many things which tend to make those about you less sincere than they otherwise would be. There is a subornation of insincerity which is not less vicious than falsehood itself, inasmuch as it produces falsehood in others. There may be no such intention, perhaps a very opposite intention; but it is weak to talk of intention when the tendency of actions may be

ascertained by reflection and exhibited in experience. 'I did not mean any harm,' is a contemptible apology for having occasioned mischief which reflection might have anticipated and precaution might have prevented. We are responsible, not only for the goodness of our intentions, but for the use of all the means in our power by which those intentions may be made wise as well as good, and their useful realization brought within the compass of a rational probability. Without such use, the plea is very pitiful, and the conduct very wrong.

In most things connected with religion, what a tide of influence sets in to bear down individual sincerity! What can be more hostile to it than that dogma, so generally held, so vehemently maintained, so vigorously enforced, of the condemnability of opinion? The wide-spread notion that belief is not merely intellectual but moral—not necessary but voluntary—seems at times to have darkly overclouded almost the whole horizon of human honesty. It strikes at the very root of sincerity, and excites man's fears, so as to make him palter with his mental convictions, and become unfaithful to his own conscience. To declare to an inquirer, 'the reception of this doctrine will save your soul,—the rejection of that doctrine will consign you to damnation,'—is a declaration of war against truthfulness. It is doing your utmost to make him a partial inquirer or a hypocritical professor. How

many would be induced to doubt, deny, or be silent about, the demonstrated propositions of Euclid, if a large and influential portion of society should uphold, that to affirm the whole to be greater than a part, was indicative of vicious disposition, and worthy of future suffering. We often hear of the dishonesty of unbelievers in their attacks on Christianity. They have shown much disingenuousness in assailing it by insinuations and covertly. The blame is not all their own; it must be shared by those Christians who make such opinions, however erroneous, a legal offence,—a social proscription, the token of God's eternal reprobation. What greater influence could be used to make them disingenuous? But in this respect the teacher has been as hardly tempted as the sceptic. How, in some churches, commences that priesthood which has for so important a part of its ministry, the inculcation of Christian sincerity and simplicity? By professing a call from the Holy Spirit, which, to say the least, cannot be evidenced; by subscribing a long and complicated creed when, to say the least, but little of it can have been investigated. Carry this farther. Connect temporal advantages, connect political advantages, connect bright prospects and hopes, connect large emoluments, connect the means of subsistence, with the profession of faith in certain dogmas, and the preference of certain forms and systems, and what but insincerity,

to a great extent, can be the result? If any intended to generate equivocation, the suppression of honest thought, a bias to outward acquiescence, without inward conviction, what means more adapted to that end could be devised? Prevent diversity of opinion, indeed; the most that can be done, is to produce uniformity of expression. Churches of humbler form and means have tried their power in the same way. They have their little tests to fence their little circles. They roll their mimic echoes of the thunder of excommunication, and within their pale keep men's tongues quiet or servile. The influence extends beyond all churches; and they who worship no god, are horror-struck at those who only adore one Divine person; and he who knows nothing, shudders at him who does know something, though he only believes a little. Hence a monstrous mass of ignorance, servility, and hypocrisy of profession, in religion. But this preserves purity of faith, we are told. What faith? For all creeds are, or may be, thus preserved. It destroys all purity of faith; for that consists in the impartiality of the adoption, and the honesty of the profession. All that is most valuable about faith is destroyed. Truth is reduced to the level of error, by being separated from the clear perception of its nature, of its evidences, and of its tendencies. The Christian ceases to sit at the feet of Jesus; or, if he does, it is with his ears stopped, and a creed in his hand for his eyes to

rest upon. Where there is individual honesty, there must be variety of opinions. The Gospel is more glorified by a hundred different but independent interpreters than by a thousand implicit believers. The real and final unity of principle must be pursued by an unbounded individuality of thought and speech. These are the intellectual evils of the practices described. Of not less magnitude are the moral evils. To bring insincerity into direct contact with religious faith, must needs deprave the whole character; its simplicity is marred; social integrity is impaired; fraudulence and trickery are associated with the notion of religion; public morality is lowered; and all this is done for the sake of elevating opinions, or supporting a system or a sect. O! they are the great reformers,—they are the real champions of truth,—who assert every man's right to a distinct opinion, if he have mental energy enough to form one! and who would no more sit in judgment on his character, nor in any way affect his reputation or comforts, on account of his conclusions, than they would on account of his stature.

'If these things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' If thus it fares with sincerity in the Church, what should we expect in the world? though truly it can scarcely be much worse. Still it is not behind in the emulation of evil. How common it is for falsehood to be con-

secrated, and insincerity to be enforced, even by the enactments of law, the administration of justice, and the institutions of government. How often is the criminal recommended solemnly to deny his criminality, and by one falsehood take the chance of inducing other falsehoods, and the evasion of justice! How often must an accusation charge that which is not, to open the way for sitting in judgment on that which is! It is no trifling evil that legal fictions should be so established as to divest fiction of disgrace. How many public forms are full of falsehood! Each generation may in succession become so familiarized to these things, as to be scarcely conscious of the fact; but is no price paid for that familiarity? Does it not, in succession, blunt the moral sense of each generation?

Then, to what has the competitive system in trade and commerce brought us? Is a transparent sincerity the common quality of mercantile transactions? Is it not comparatively rare, and by its rarity honourable; and by its merited honour, a merited condemnation of the prevailing system and spirit, showing that there is something wrong, and which should be amended? We make our literature a snare and trap for sincerity; we make it, by a long array of legal and social arrangements, most difficult for an honest and independent man, without wealth or party to back him, to get access to the public mind, save by catering to public preju-

dice. There is a premium for insincerity in every department; nor least of all in social intercourse. The man who always says what he thinks on any subject, however admirable his intellect, however benevolent his heart, however bland his manners, however unobtrusive his conversation, would stand but a poor chance, for some time at least, in society. He would be deemed odd, eccentric, disagreeable; and be outlawed by the conventionalism of the day. There is an established taste, and talk, as well as an established faith. How many topics there are, on which, to keep in with the common run of society, a woman must have no opinion; a man only one opinion—that perhaps a wrong one. These laws are appropriately enforced by wonder, ridicule, sarcasm, coldness, and ultimate proscription. Howard was called a busy, meddling, wrong-headed man, addicted strangely to running about amongst gaols. Men declared Rousseau to be mad till they drove him so. By a ruder race, Whitfield and Wesley were pelted, by the very class of which thousands now sanctify their memories. Would that one could but show the mischief and misery of all this fraud, cant, ignorance, hollowness, and intolerance! Would that one could but display so persuasively as to be resistless, the beauty, the dignity, the practicability, the blessedness of perfect sincerity and truth in all concerns of religion, law, government, trade, literature, and society! Many

disguises would be torn off which are now worn; many opinions avowed which are now suppressed; many forms abolished which are now consecrated: but how much would be done for the discovery of truth, how much for the dignity of character, and how much for the promotion of happiness! Hypocrisy has been said to be the homage which vice pays to goodness; were the tribute but remitted, the dominion of goodness would be extended. O, it holds good everywhere and always,—'Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay!' If we cannot accomplish this moral revolution, let us, at least, abstain from upholding any of the barriers which obstruct its approach: it must come; and when man's thoughts are on the tongue as in the heart, then will God's kingdom be coming on earth as it is in heaven.

People begin this unholy work too commonly even with those for the formation of whose characters they are responsible before God and man. I do not say they do it intentionally or consciously; but, certainly, the young are often initiated into insincerity by the conduct of those about them, and who should be especially on their guard against such a result. The child that is severely or injudiciously punished for a fault, is thereby tempted to insincerity;—a first falsehood has often been told from the feeling of fear. The child, naturally enough, sees more evil in the suffering than in the untruth.

Then, how often does the parent try to gain a sort of reflected glory by an emblazoned display of the child's acquirements! The little observer sees the exaggeration while it loves the applause, and anon tries of itself to accomplish the same end by the same means. Children are keen observers, and apt imitators. If they see persons civilly treated to their faces, and ridiculed behind their backs, they may very likely learn the lesson which was not meant for them. The remarks or questions of children are often inopportune and puzzling; that is no justification of the conduct which, without thinking it may be, practically teaches them to stifle inquiry, or be content with a verbal mystification to hide ignorance.

One might accumulate instances for hours of this evil influence over the young—this securing to them an inheritance of insincerity. It is not the less dangerous because unintentional. Parental responsibility should lead to parental caution. The leading strings of unconscious example too often prevent children walking in truth. But to look close to this, is within the spirit of the commandment which we have received from the Father; and this is pre-eminently one of the cases in which, to reform others, men must reform themselves. We should not only abhor the deceitful tongue, but avoid the circumstances which prompt the deceit. We should pray, 'lead us not into temptation,' and take care

not to walk into temptation. Our character, as Christians, is children of the light. Truth of heart and voice is above all truth of doctrine, but will ultimately ensure it more than any other means. There is no more certain or exalted characteristic of religion than this. The regeneration of the Gospel, is to be born with Christ, to bear witness of the truth. The fact that God seeth the heart is a strong motive, weakened by the seeming remoteness of his judgment. The frankness which lets men see it, supplies a weak motive, which is strengthened by the promptness of the judgment which they exercise. This subject goes much deeper than that mere avoidance of gross falsehood, which ranks amongst the very elements of morality. It should produce that searching self-examination which detects the deceits men are apt to put on their own minds and consciences. It should make man require of himself that which God requires of him—truth in the inward parts. No fiends without have ever done so much to 'palter with us, in a double sense,' as the tempter within. There is the deep root of deception; there should be the lucid fountain of simplicity, sincerity, frankness of character. We should not shrink from avowing our real motives to ourselves; that is the way in which iniquity is found to be hateful; and man gains satisfaction in righteousness, whatever its earthly and immediate consequences.

And let no one say that, in this discourse, I am aiming at anything Utopian or chimerical. I pretend not to say by what degrees or in what precise way the world will grow more honest and individuals more transparent; nor would I underrate the virtue that exists. Enough there is, blessed be God, to redeem the name of humanity from its calumniators. My object is perfectly simple, tangible, practical, and practicable. It is only this:—do not set snares for other's sincerity, nor for your own. Do not influence sceptics to disingenuousness, by joining an outcry about damnable heresies or doubts. Do not help to pollute the springs of Christian instruction by demanding that the teacher should profess and ever adhere to the previous faith or prejudices of his pupils. Do not judge character by opinions, and assume depravity in the one on the ground of error in the other. Do not uphold institutions and practices which legalise falsehood that would be ridiculous, but that all falsehood is worse than ridiculous. Do not take the fact in the proverb for a precept: 'It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, he boasteth.' Do not countenance cant of any kind, interested or unmeaning, in any department, —literature, education, society. Do not praise or frighten, or suffer others to praise or frighten, your children out of the straightforward path. Heed your own example, both in its direct and indirect

influence. Be true to yourself; to your inmost soul. Live in the conscious presence of the God of truth. These are the moral of my discourse—these are practical precepts—these are, I am sure, Christian precepts; and may God give us grace to observe them. Amen.

SERMON XVI.

ON TEMPTATION.—PART I. AVOIDANCE.

PSALM cxix. 37.

'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'

'A VAIN thing,' and 'vanity,' are terms very often put, in the Old Testament scriptures, for idols and idolatry. The prophets of Israel, glowing with the lofty conceptions of Deity which they derived from revelation, could not but think and speak contemptuously of the absurd personifications, whose figures were cast in gold and silver for the halls of wealth, and hewn out of the log for the hovel of poverty, and made the objects of a noisy and degrading homage, as inefficacious as they were unconscious. Often did they portray, with a severe and dignified irony, the folly of such practices. Often did they indignantly contrast the majesty of Jehovah with the senselessness of the base things which were

set up as his competitors for man's adoration. Often did they denounce the guilt of idolatry to their countrymen, and warn them of the danger of drawing down upon themselves the most awful judgments. And while sometimes they dilated on this theme, with all the copiousness and gorgeousness of Eastern poetry, at others they concentrated the host of strong emotions which it raised in them into a single word, or phrase, which they imprinted as a brand on the very forehead of national apostacy. And thus was it that, in their language, the language of divine truth, the Gods of the neighbouring countries, whether the meanest tribes or the mightiest empires, those of the Hittites and Jebusites, or those of Egypt and Assyria; whatever their imagined attributes, or their elevation in the hierarchy of divinities; with all their temples, and altars, and high places, and caverns of divination, and consecrated groves; and the varied attractions of their worship, and the multitude of their priests, and the millions of their adorers; were all compressed, and described, and condemned, in this one word, *vanity*. This, more probably than the frivolous disposition which we commonly intend by that epithet, was the meaning of the writer of this Psalm, when he offered the prayer which has just been read as my text. The connected clause is, 'and quicken thou me in thy way.' Now, though the 'way of God' includes the

sobriety of mind and lowliness of heart which are opposed to vanity; and he is in that way who 'walks humbly with his God;' yet so to confine the meaning of the terms would be putting a very limited interpretation on a general expression. Or if we expound the 'way of God,' in its full acceptation, as the way of truth, piety, and righteousness, then 'vanity' seems neither iniquitous nor comprehensive enough to be thus placed in solitary opposition. But if we take 'vanity' in the sense of idolatry, that mass of error, guilt, and wretchedness; and the 'way of God,' of his prescribed service, in pure worship and moral obedience; the opposition is then apparent and appropriate; and the two clauses form a prayer, whose fulness, strength, and earnestness, cannot but interest the devout mind. 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'

In this prayer, the Psalmist petitions that he may not even behold idolatrous practices; lest, perhaps, he should be unawares overcome, and be surprised into a participation of the guilt which he only intended to witness; or lest, though preserved from this, he should yet, by having it familiarized to his sight, contract a culpable indifference towards it in his heart; or, if his own firmness could securely abide the trial, that his example might not lead others into dangerous situations, and plunge them into an abasement, which, unless thus practically encouraged by him, they might have escaped;

or he might pray under the influence of pain and regret on account of others, who had begun with merely witnessing the celebration of those ceremonies of iniquity, and were gradually led on till they became their votaries and advocates; and it would certainly be his desire, not only that his eye should not witness these practices, but that there should be no such practices in the land for any eye to witness, but all its inhabitants, and all around them, be true worshippers of the God of truth. And with these several views and motives, we may, and should, adopt the prayer as against temptation generally. The great and easily besetting sin of the writer's time and country does not exist to us, in such relative circumstances, as to render necessary his prayer against idolatry. In the strict theological sense of the word, it may be practised by numbers called Christians. They worship beings inferior to the Father—beings pictured in their prayers by the attributes of corporeal form. Whatever there may be wrong in this, it is free from the foul immoralities which made ancient idolatry so enormously wicked. Other directions, therefore, claim precedence for our watchfulness against moral danger, our self-jealousy, and our prayers. In whatever direction our chief peril may be, let us resist its first approaches, adopting in devout humility the Psalmist's supplication: 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity.'

The writer feared lest he should, unawares, be entrapped into a participation of the guilt which originally he only intended to witness. And it has always been the fact that many have fallen by a temptation which they despised. The undue confidence of strength is itself weakness. 'Is thy servant a dog,' said Hazael, 'that he should do this thing?' And yet he did it. 'Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I,' said Peter to Christ, 'though I should die with thee.' And yet he did forsake him, within a few hours, and most basely. There is no danger so great as the unconsciousness or disregard of danger. There is, in the ordinary circumstances of human life, a traceable and obvious proportion between the amount of temptation and the amount of transgression. While it would be unjust to judge individuals by this presumption, we cannot avoid observing it wherever large masses of mankind are concerned, and it is useful that we should observe it there; for the knowledge of human nature is the knowledge of ourselves. Wherever institutions, customs, or the progress of events, have given any class a preponderating influence in legislation, it has uniformly happened, that the interests of the community have been sacrificed to the interests of that class. In the democracy of ancient Athens, the security of private property was comparatively small; the burdens of the state were thrown disproportionately on wealthy individuals. In France,

before the revolution, they fell almost exclusively upon the poorer classes. Each was exempted or despoiled as it had opportunity to perpetrate injustice. Wherever ecclesiastics have long held political power, creeds have been complicated, ceremonies have been numerous, dignities have been created, wealth has been accumulated, pretensions have been advanced, and, unless some controlling power has arisen, there has been an extensive and extending interference with the concerns of civil and social life. Wherever there is not a vigilant police to prevent crime, nor a tolerable certainty and just proportion of punishment, offences have always been numerous. Wherever law is an advantageous profession, laws tend to become numerous, obscure, uncertain, and burdensome. What is the moral of all this? Not that we should condemn those classes as more depraved than others; for they have only yielded to temptations to which others, similarly circumstanced, have yielded also. The fault is more in the systems than in the men. Nor is all the lesson learnt when we have pleaded, or laboured, for the regulation of those systems, by principles founded on the human constitution and the dictates of righteousness. There remains the important admonition to us, that the proportion of sin to temptation seldom varies; that we are accessary to our own degradation, if we needlessly place ourselves in circumstances of trial,

though we may be very fearless of the result; that though we may be conscious of no disposition to abuse power, we ought not to hold irresponsible power lest it should generate the disposition; that though we may be conscious of strict integrity, we should not become the unchecked depositaries of other's property, in a manner and to an extent which offer strong inducements to forfeit that integrity; in a word, that we ought, whenever we can, to avoid placing ourselves in circumstances of moral danger, because those circumstances have, in numberless instances, proved too strong for men as confident and as good as ourselves, and therefore may to us. To turn away from beholding vanity, is the best, perhaps the only proof, of a deep and sincere determination to resist it. It is the best point at which that resistance can be made; very often, practically, the only one where it can be made effectually.

The Psalmist feared that, even were this worst evil escaped, he might yet, by familiarity, contract a culpable indifference to the sin against which he prayed. In this, too, we should sympathize with him; and be aware that though we may not actually commit crime, yet continued exposure to temptation is injurious to the feeling which a pious and holy mind should cherish. It is apt to destroy that sensitiveness, that delicacy of the perception of right and wrong, that tenderness of conscience, that

fineness and strength of what we may call the moral sense, which constitutes so beautiful an ornament, and affords so powerful a protection, to goodness of character. To the eye and ear, the loathsomest sights and sounds, if constantly presented, become in time less offensive, if not altogether indifferent. It is the same in morals. Let the inhabitant of a slave country retain as much as he may of the kindest feelings of humanity, his slumbers will scarcely be disturbed, at any rate his nerves will thrill with little of the horror that would be felt here, at the sound of the lash on human bodies, and the scream of pain. Circumstances have impaired in him (I do not say his moral rectitude, but) one blessed constitutional preservative of mankind from cruelty. If a man mix frequently and habitually with profane swearers, it may be, perhaps, that, to the day of his death, a vain oath may never pass his lips; but it can scarcely be, that such sounds should not, by the diminished shock they give his pious feeling, indicate a diminution of constant, reverential emotion towards the Deity. And this evil spreads from the particular case to the general principle of virtue. Conscience acquires a bias. It ceases to have the same respect for each of the commandments of God, and that is to have less respect for them all. It descends from the seat of judgment occasionally to occupy the standing of the advocate. Excuses and palliations are invented, and sometimes the straight rule of life

is carelessly applied. Whether this induce a corresponding laxity of principle in all other cases, or whether a lurking consciousness of being over lenient to one set of sins is sought to be made up for, by increased vehemence in the condemnation of others, it is manifest, either way, that the man is not what he was, nor what he should be. Though he may not have been signally defeated, he is a less vigorous and less valuable combatant in the Christian warfare. He is in a state which every man who is in earnest about his own moral improvement, about his salvation even, must anxiously deprecate.

I have supposed the text to imply that, though the firmness of the writer might sustain him through a severe trial of his principles, yet that he would avoid it, lest his example should encourage others, who would be less able or less disposed to endure it, and to whose transgressions he would thus become accessary. In this, again, he is worthy of our imitation. In this spirit is the New Testament exhortation to 'avoid even the appearance of evil,' and the declaration of Paul, in reference to some who had been led into idolatrous practices from seeing older Christians partake of food which had been sacrificed to idols, that if meat caused his brother to offend he would eat no meat while the world standeth. Much of the power of example belongs to us, independently of our will; much of its

exercise is independent also; we cannot divest ourselves of it; it is ours without (or if we dislike it, against) our consent. This kind of influence is one condition of social existence. We are not, therefore, to conclude it to be without responsibility, any more than speech, reason, or any of the faculties of our nature, which are similarly circumstanced. In determining on the innocence of pursuits, amusements, indulgences, we should at least make one item in the calculation—their effect on others, the possibility of their becoming a stumbling-block, and causing any to transgress. If there be a man so clear of judgment, so pure in heart, so firm of purpose, that he can abide uncontaminated in the tents of wickedness; that he can pass through situations of the severest temptation without swerving a hair's-breadth from the strictest line of duty; that he can be the frequent associate of the profligate, and yet their evil communications corrupt not his good manners; unless some paramount obligation of justice or benevolence compelled him to do so, he ought to abstain for their sakes who, where he safely advances, may follow to their own peril and perdition. Such obligations there have doubtless been; as on those who had a divine mission for the reformation of mankind, or those who have had before them the fair and animating prospect of accomplishing some glorious object of philanthropy; but these are rare—the exceptions, not the rule, of human

life; and rare also, O how rare! is the firmness and elevation of character which has just, for argument sake, been supposed. The very disposition needlessly to brave temptation is an indication of not having arrived at such perfection.

Perhaps the prayer of the text was prompted by observation of others, and grief at their aberrations. *They* have gazed on vanity till they became its votaries, slaves, and victims; turn *mine* eyes away. The failings of others are our warnings; and impressive ones they are. Are you prone to defer future advantages to present gratifications; to underrate the respectability, comfort, influence, which may be a comparatively remote, yet an attainable prize in this world, and the seemingly still more remote things of the world to come; to be impatient of personal privations and self-denials; to strive for the prompt accomplishment of your desires at any rate?—Look at Esau, a character with many estimable qualities—frank, generous, and affectionate—selling his birthright for a mess of pottage; bartering, for the immediate indulgence of his appetite, or relief of his exhaustion, the privilege then most dearly cherished; selling at that pitiful price the first blessing of his father and his God; and entailing on himself years of tearful and useless repentance. Are you the favoured child of prosperity, raised to that eminence of fortune from which the toils, and struggles, and endurances, of the great

mass of your fellow-creatures are only matter of philosophical or charitable contemplation; the enjoyments of sense, of taste, of intellect at your command, and those of piety not foreign to your heart? Look at that king of Israel in whom this combination was carried to its highest degree; see how, in the plenitude of wealth and wisdom, he gazed on the vanity of idols, till condemnation mitigated into disapprobation, and that into endurance, and that grew into conformity, and that into advocacy and patronage, till he insulted the majesty of Jehovah by the foul altars of fabulous deities rising in immediate neighbourhood and impious opposition. Pride, passion, and avarice are the modern idols, to which men thus apostatize. Or are you eager for wealth, eager for situations which place it within your reach, though not at your command?—Look at Judas—sincere as I think we must believe him to have been, when first he attached himself to Christ, bearing the bag which contained the little store of that poorly-endowed company in earthly treasure; hankering after its contents, and trespassing on them, and greedily anticipating their increase, and covering his fraud by hypocrisy, and infuriated at reading detection in his Master's eye, and, under the joint influence of revenge and avarice, betraying for a bribe the Son of God. Well may the righteous pray to be prevented taking the first step in these paths of death.

And yet this construction of the prayer has a sentiment of charity in it, identifying the writer in weakness with those who have stumbled and fallen; and ascribing the difference to more favourable circumstances, which are thankfully acknowledged, and their continuance earnestly supplicated. 'By the grace of God,' said Paul, 'I am what I am.' But for an occurrence in which he was only passive, an event most extraordinary and unexpected, he might have remained a persecutor, instead of becoming an apostle. In that case, by his circumstances, the God of justice would have tried him; but could he have had the excellence, the mental enjoyments, the glorious hopes, to which, as it was, he did attain? Obviously not. And the remembrance of what he had been, operated to keep alive his charity, and stimulate his affectionate zeal towards those who continued to be as he had been. In humility and charity should we censure (if censure we must) those who have, with us, 'one human heart,' though that heart may have been exposed to, and corrupted by, malignant influences from which we have been providentially shielded?

Lastly, I ascribed to the Psalmist the devout wish, not only that he might be preserved from the snares of idolatry, but that they might no longer be spread in the land; that there might not be this 'vanity' for any eye to see. And thus the Lord's Prayer includes the petition that *we* may

not be led into temptation, and also that the kingdom of God may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Our heart's desire and prayer should daily be for the diminution of human guilt and wretchedness. We should encourage, and support, to the best of our ability, whatever tends to effect that diminution. The expression of our own opinions, the observation of our example, may so tend, in a narrower or wider circle, according to our stations. Let us give their full force to the side of truth, piety, justice, and charity. The formation of some new institutions, the amendment of others which exist, may have that tendency; let them have our ready countenance and active aid. The diffusion of knowledge has that tendency, in an eminent degree; be, then, the friends of universal education till its blessings cover the land, and are as common as heaven's air and sunshine. Religious worship and instruction are means to this end—be they the means of our personal adoption, of our constant recommendation. By whatever social arrangements men are placed in circumstances which present fewer temptations, history and experience assure us we may confidently reckon that vice itself will be diminished. These let us advance; and leave to others despairing lamentations over the total depravity of human nature, which, were they true, would reduce goodness to the result of miracle alone, and make it unimportant whether man's eyes

were turned away from vanity, or ceaselessly directed towards its most powerful allurements.

May it, then, be a constant object with us to adopt that course which is most favourable to the cultivation of piety and goodness. Let us avoid temptation as the surest mode of avoiding transgression. So far as the lot of others depends upon us, what we do should be regulated by the same principle. Servants, children, pupils, relatives, friends; for whomsoever we have to act, do (in this) unto others as ye would that they should do unto you. As much as possible prevent the collision of their earthly interests with their religious and moral duties. They may be the poorer for it, and yet the better—and if the better, then the happier, here and hereafter.

And if temptation must be encountered, as often enough it must, without any voluntary addition on our part, then let us call up the energy of Christian motives in our minds, summon before us the blessings and the terrors of the world to come, endure as seeing Him who is invisible save to the eye of faith, by humble, fervent prayer invoke him to be strong in our weakness, and beseech him to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them on the crown of glory which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give, in the day of retribution, to all them that love his appearing, and await it in holy obedience.

SERMON XVII.

ON TEMPTATION.—PART II. RESISTANCE.

PROVERBS xvii. 13.

"The fining pot is for silver and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts."

THE good man, if he be wise withal, will not needlessly expose himself to trials and temptations: though clear principles and long habit may seem to ensure the firmness of his standing, he will still take heed lest he should fall; and, so far as is consistent with the demands of duty, he will keep out of circumstances which would surround him with inducements to transgress the laws of piety, integrity, and benevolence. 'Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity' was the supplication of the Psalmist; 'lead us not into temptation' was the prayer which Christ taught his disciples to offer; to 'avoid even the appearance of evil' was the earnest precept of an apostle. And so long as it is easier to shun than to resist; so long as it is true that

'pride cometh before a fall, and the Lord loveth the humble;' so long as we see in the world that the amount of vice bears a constant proportion to the amount of temptation; so long must this be the path of wisdom and of safety. But it would be a mistake to infer from this doctrine that Christian excellence is nothing more than negative goodness, which could be found in one who should be so situated as from birth to death never to encounter temptation at all. It would be a mistake to suppose that the avoidance of temptation should be a practical principle paramount to the claims upon us of God and truth, of duty to our fellow-creatures and even to ourselves. It would be a mistake to imagine that the temptations which abound in the world are not under the superintendence of Providence; have not their ends to answer, and those important ones, in the moral government of God; and are not essentially necessary as portions of his plan for the ultimate excellence and felicity of his rational creatures. It would be a mistake to suppose that the Christian warrior is not much oftener to fight than to fly; through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of heaven; to bear the cross before he wears the crown; and by successful conflict to lay hold on the promise to him that overcometh, that he shall sit down with the Saviour on his throne of glory. We should preclude these mistakes by coupling with such petitions and pre-

cepts as have just been quoted, the doctrine of the text. It teaches us that temptation has its agency, in the providence of God, for the purification of man's heart; that the ways of God with us may be compared with those of the refiner of precious metals. He subjects them to a process which seems destructive, but the result of which is to separate the vile from the valuable, and to bring forth the latter free from debasing alloy, not only uninjured, but the more pure, useful, and resplendent. It is by trial that every faculty is developed; it is by successful resistance to evil that strength of character is not only exhibited but actually formed; it is by repeated triumphs over perils that character is conducted to maturity and perfection. 'This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised withal;' and he hath given it in wisdom and in love; for his glory and for their highest good.

A character strong in the power of resisting temptation, partakes in a high degree of moral sublimity. What is the charm of that noble sketch of the seraph Abdiel in Milton's 'Paradise Lost?' It is this principle of resistance. There is nothing imposing in his native dignity. He is surrounded with intelligences of a higher order: thrones, dominations, powers, the nobility of heaven. There is nothing particularly admirable in his conduct, considered apart from his circumstances. He merely

retains his allegiance to Jehovah; he simply preserves gratitude towards goodness, and yields obedience to omnipotence. But he is alone faithful among the faithless. And our admiration is not mere effect of contrast. That has its effect: but the materials of the contrast were the varied aspects of the temptation. There was example; but he resisted that. There were promise, and threatening, and ridicule; but he resisted them. There was the inducement of associations to which he had been accustomed—of affections which he had cherished—of reverence which he had paid; but he resisted these. There was the appearance of safety, and the hope even of triumph; but he resisted that. And therefore it is that he is more sublime than those gorgeous creations of the poet; than the legions of apostate spirits and their archangel leaders; that they stand abashed before him; and our hearts do him homage as he leaves the rebel camp on his long and lonely path of righteousness. Herein the poet was a theologian and a moralist. By his delineations he makes our feelings and sympathies do intellectual work, and teach us religious truth. His imagination has performed the office of a commentator on the doctrine of the text, that as 'the fining pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, so the Lord trieth hearts.' He has taught that resistance to temptation is moral greatness. There can be few more satisfactory certificates of oodness

than the not walking with a multitude to do evil. The description is negative; but it has a large positive implication.

Few minds have ever been richer in moral truth than that of Milton. It was because he was not only one of the first of poets, but one of the best of men. It was eminently true in his case that 'the heart of the wise teacheth him understanding and giveth learning to his lips.' His own history is that of a series of resistances to temptations; and thus he became the man he was—a man for his country to glory in and reverence, through all succeeding generations. His early thoughts and wishes were directed to the church. To minister in the sanctuary was the object of his holy and fervent aspirations. But the door was closed, only to be opened by the profession of a creed. He would not buy the opportunity of influencing others' minds by the voluntary degradation of his own. He would not 'subscribe slave.' Here was resistance to how much, not only without but within; not only of temporal comfort, but of mental enjoyment; not only of selfish ease, but of benevolent aspiration. The next great event of his life was his return from Italy. What strong inducements there must have been for his remaining there! Where is there such a sojourn for a youthful poet? To how many have only its climate and its landscape been bonds—silken ones—but which no sense of duty could give

them strength enough to break! To him what enchantment there must have been in those antique monuments, and those antique associations, with which that land of departed glory and everlasting loveliness is covered! The proofs remain of how deeply he felt the charm of its society. There too had he been loved and honoured. There his first laurels were woven, and the incense was burned before him of the most enthusiastic and intoxicating homage. He felt it all, and he left it all; for the sound of conflict came to him across the waves; the liberties of his country were in danger; and the battle of freedom was to be fought with tongue, and pen, and sword. He came; and he became the Defender of the People of England. In no bower of enchantment could his senses be so steeped in luxury as ever to deprive him of his armour, or stay him an instant from the field. Through long years, but most honourable and useful years, of political and theological controversy, he resisted the allurements of that poetry for which his soul was framed. And when the sense of sight was the anticipated sacrifice to the task of vindicating a nation's rights and conduct to Europe, he *sacrificed* the sense of sight. And in disgrace, obscurity, old age, and blindness, must there not have been temptations to murmuring, sullenness, despondency? Must they not have crowded thick upon his brain, crying, 'Curse God, and die?' Then he dictated

his immortal poem, and left also that record, which but a few years since was brought to light, which testifies how far he advanced beyond his age in his perception of the pure doctrine of the Gospel of Christ. Noble-minded man! cast into a fiery furnace; but whose knee could never be made to bend to Mammon or to Baal, yet never neglected its filial reverence to Jehovah.

The history of the excellent, and the analysis of moral excellence, conduct us to a similar view of virtue as consisting very much of resistance to temptation. Good thoughts and wishes and resolutions arise in every mind. The difference is, that with too many they perish where they rose; while with the righteous they are carried forth into action. Humanity is never destitute of beneficent impulses; they are too seldom obeyed. Suppose a scene of wretchedness, like that which some of our manufacturing districts so often present, to be contemplated by any given number of spectators. Perhaps few, if any, would not feel an inward wish and prompting for its relief. But one cannot overcome the temptation of his indolence, which shrinks from the requisite exertion. Another cannot overcome his parsimony, which tells him he cannot move in such a matter without setting an example of liberal contribution. Another thinks perhaps that some ridicule in the circle of his associates might attach to his so employing himself; and he cannot over-

come that. And so the suffering continues till some individual breaks the spell, and then men forget that there was a difficulty. The pleadings of animal appetite; the power of passions and habits; the prospect of present indulgence, gain, and honour; the evil principles and examples of society; all are so many influences which virtue consists in encountering with a firm and unfailing resistance. As such resistance is repeated, the character acquires consistency and energy. The outward power diminishes as the inward power increases. Circumstances either command or are commanded. They form the character of the feeble; they minister to the purposes and ultimate happiness of the strong. When Paul could say, 'None of these things move me,' he was master of his destiny. He was then in a state to move the world. He was sure of fulfilling his course with joy. This view is carried to its utmost extent in that monition to the persecuted Hebrew Christians, 'Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.'

The word and works of God are full of beautiful and instructive analogies. They arise from the combination of simplicity and variety in the Divine plan; of simplicity in its principles, with boundless variety in its details. There are manifold operations of the one spirit which worketh in all. The spiritual condition of the good man—a devout, holy, benevolent state of mind—is called *life*. And what

is one of the most striking characteristics of vitality, in the natural world, but the power of resisting external influences. The same elements surround the living body as encompass the dead; but they cannot decompose the one as they do the other. They loosen the particles of the one, and change their colour, and dissolve their texture, while on the other they make no impression whatever. This fact enters into the definition given by physiologists: there are other qualities; but as to this particular, life *is* the faculty of resistance. It is so with spiritual life. The man who has it, withstands the temptations, of abundance, to make him a sensualist; of power, to make him dishonest; of ignorance or defencelessness in others, to make him unjust; of secrecy, to make him sin; and of credulity, to make him a deceiver. And this life has been generated and sustained by similar means to those which exhibit its maturity and strength.

How has Providence ordered that the bodily senses, and the mental faculties, should be brought to their full developement? By repeated trials, exercising them as they are capable of being exercised; by successive corrections of error, and being habituated to the true and right; by what, if they had a moral character, we should call temptations—by what we may describe as trying and proving, and by other terms alike employed in treating of both topics. The eye of the infant is imposed

upon by a thousand fallacies. The sight which measures distance well, must have resisted many illusions to acquire its accuracy. Mental progress is a continual overcoming of difficulties. All our faculties begin with trial and error. And such is our moral history: it is the detection of delusions—the looking beyond external appearances — the becoming wise by experience—the gathering of strength by one successful effort for a greater effort —the taking warning by failure—the persevering in the right, once ascertained, even unto the end.

The second and third chapters of the Book of Genesis, whatever their origin, and whatever doctrinal absurdities may have been deduced from them, are a profound allegory, and full of truth and wisdom. The writer's notions of the providence and plan of the Creator accord with the view we have been taking. Why were not the first parents of the human race left in a state of ignorant innocence? Why had they not their garden with no forbidden tree? Because such a condition must have been stationary, and at a very low point of moral worth. Had they and their posterity so remained, there would not have been guilt; there would have been harmlessness; there could not have been anything deserving the name of virtue; there could have been no such heroic and ever memorable faith as that of Abraham; there could not have been the meek and dignified patience of Moses the legislator;

there could not have been the glorious and quenchless zeal of Paul the apostle; there could not have been the self-devoted love of Christ the Saviour. Had a state without temptation existed, and been perpetuated, humanity would only have been a little above the brutes, instead of becoming but a little lower than the angels. But God's plan from the first was to try men's hearts, and purify and expand them by trial. Thus only could humanity best bear his image. And as the temptations of society could not then exist, the writer represents a positive prohibition as issued for the very purpose of constituting life a state of probation.

The New Testament as well as the Old begins with a temptation. As Adam was tried, so was Christ. But the event was very different. The one indicated the commencement of a plan of probation, the other exhibited the results of that plan. Without such trial, Adam in Paradise would have been the perfection of humanity—a poor and worthless being compared with Christ, who was the perfection of humanity as formed by it. The diversities in the two temptations are all characteristic. The one was that of an untaught, untrained, unexercised man; the other that of one formed by Providence, taught in the school of human society, of personal experience, and of the word of God. The one trial was a mere appeal to the senses; the other involved also the higher principles of our nature, the

ambition of temporal sovereignty, and the yet loftier prize of spiritual domination. It was fitting the first should fail, that so a system of probation might be established. It was fitting the last should triumph, that we might see the grace and wisdom of that system, and to what glory and exaltation God thereby will conduct humanity. For this is what we behold in Christ. He was tempted for our succour in temptation. He was made perfect through sufferings, that he might be our pattern of perfection; the exhibition of our ultimate destiny; the object of our present aspirations; the mark at which we should aim; the standard by which we should try ourselves; the first born among many brethren; the leader of our upward course. And seeing that he is so, 'let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus.'

These considerations may teach a more judicious procedure than is sometimes practised with young persons. It is a vain attempt to try to keep them out of all temptation. You cannot do it. Temptations are too numerous and subtle for all your vigilance. And if you could, what would follow? That you would only have formed a negative and feeble character, which would probably take the first evil impression after your influence was withdrawn. And withdrawn it some day must be. Do

not make temptations for them; but let them gradually be exposed to trials of their principles while there is the parental or friendly eye to watch, the parental or friendly hand to shield, and heart to care for them. The needless prolongation of authority, and an injudicious sternness towards excusable failings, have done the young at least as much harm as the opposite extreme of criminal indifference, or criminal indulgence. Watch over them, for you must render an account. But remember, that the best account you can render is, that you prepared them for the self-acquisition of that moral strength by which alone they can acquit themselves well of their own personal responsibility.

We should learn, too, the importance of every resistance to temptation, inasmuch as every resistance, if successful, augments our moral strength; and if unsuccessful, tends to its destruction. The clear and bright hopes of heaven which bless a virtuous old age are won, not by single efforts, but by repeated victories; the power of evil still diminishing; the power of resistance still increasing; till the individual was strong in faith giving glory to God. And thus may 'the trial of your faith,' including in that term every Christian grace, 'being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ.'

It is only in the characters of the good that we behold, here, the genuine results of the plan of Divine Providence. The Scripture applies similar imagery to futurity. The trials of the righteous, the future punishments of the wicked, are both pictured by the fire which seems to destroy, but which really purifies. O, be such its influence; that thus the Lord who trieth the hearts may finally cleanse all hearts from every impurity, mould them into the likeness of his own moral image, fill them with the love of his own infinite excellence, and bless them with his own everlasting blessing.

SERMON XVIII.

SABBATICAL OBSERVANCES.

MARK ii. 27.

"The Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

IT is true both in a literal and in a spiritual sense, that man on the earth has always looked up to heaven. He has felt the need of a power above, for his guidance and protection, and desired to obey its will, that it might realize his expectations. He has always been ready to find, moreover, that this power manifested its will by positive injunctions, requiring external obedience: thus rendering it more easy and tangible than the moral duties which demand reflection and feeling; and giving him with more facility the consciousness of merit, and the assurance of recompense. The lesson has been learned on earth much oftener than it was ever taught from heaven; and while one set of positive institutions, imposed on one people for a limited

duration, may claim a real divine authority, observances have been multiplied and perpetuated till they have often threatened to overwhelm a rational devotion and a beneficent morality beneath a monstrous pile of superstitions. And it has happened that the looking up to heaven, in this sense, has not been unconnected with the results of literally gazing upon the material heavens. It is said, in the Mosaic theory of creation, that 'God made lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years.' And soon did men learn to apply this celestial machinery to the measurement of time. The sun guided them to the year, and the moon to the month. But other measurement was needed. Months were a good subdivision of the year, especially aided by the regularly returning seasons for an intermediate quantity; but days were too minute and numerous a subdivision of the month. An intermediate quantity was wanted there. And where was it found? Most probably in what till recent times was believed to be the number of the planets, and which was known in ancient Egypt. The days were clustered into sevens. The week became a measure of time, as common as the month, and the year. Man was still guided by the heavens. His natural science and his religious speculations went hand in hand. Seven was made a sacred number. Philosophy calculated

by it; astrology predicted by it; and superstition by it soothed or terrified. Over all the earth there were years, months, and weeks; and every where a superstition, which was growing darker and darker, working through them upon men's souls; till Moses was prompted of God to look back through the spiritual evil to the physical good, and to correct the one, and to improve and exalt the other into a spiritual good, by the institution of the Jewish Sabbath.

That was an era in the history of humanity. In the records of the ancient heathen world, we find the numbering of the days by sevens, and the supposed sacredness of the number seven; but we find no Sabbath. There was no weekly return of a day of purification for the polluted, of instruction for the ignorant, of festival for the torpid, and of rest for the weary. This 'law was given by Moses,' *i. e.*, by the God from whom he had his mission. For the Sabbath was made *for* man, not *by* man. It was a positive institution, founded on a physical fact, but most abundant in mental and moral blessings.

By the theory of a six days creation, and a divine rest on the seventh, the God of nature is identified with the God of Israel. We are taught the harmony of the natural and the supernatural. They are inwoven as portions of one great plan. But of a patriarchal Sabbath there are no indications

Of an institution, there is no record anterior to Moses. *Then,* the appointment was part of a system. The Sabbath was a sign of the Jewish covenant. It indicated a dispensation of outward observance and positive obligation. It was needful for the Israelites thus to learn devotion, till ripened for the spirituality of Christian worship. It was needful thus to learn obedience, till matured for the perfect law of liberty, where morality is the application of the principle of benevolence. The mental improvement of a day must be voluntary; the abstinence from labour may be enforced. They had not only their weekly Sabbath, but their Sabbatical year. During that year the land was to remain untilled. Both were symbols of their condition. They were the badges of a system in which a special providence rewarded or punished ceremonial obedience or its neglect. They belonged to a system of preparation for better things to come, when Christ should do with it, as Moses had done with anterior religions, look through it to original principles, stay the corruption, and elicit a higher kind of good.

The Jewish Sabbath passed away with Judaism and its routine of ceremonies. All were destroyed in the destruction of their temple. Christ consecrated no day by formal appointment. Nor did his Apostles. But the skiey influences were yet over the world. Jews and Gentiles reckoned their weeks

of seven days. Christ had risen on the first day of the week. It was *the Lord's day*. Its distinction from the rest by Christians for the social purposes of their religion was natural, voluntary, universal. They were 'in the spirit on the Lord's day;' it summoned them to their feasts of love, and songs of praise.

When Constantine bent before the cross, civil polity blended with religious feeling, and gave political sanction to the day. It had now fallen into the hands of authority; that of the emperor was obtained, that of the Deity was claimed; a confusion of the Lord's day with the Jewish Sabbath began, and the world is yet the worse for superstitions from that time engendered and multiplied.

The identification of the Lord's day with the Jewish Sabbath is both fallacious and pernicious.

The ten commandments, on the fourth of which the sabbatical observance of one day in the week is commonly rested, were the foundation of the Jewish code. They were the summary, or rather the elemental principles, of God's covenant with Israel. Moses was never commissioned of heaven to be an universal instructor, or universal legislator. That was reserved for Christ. The mission of Moses was to the Jews, and to them alone. The principles condensed in the ten commandments were wrought out in the whole array of enactments which occupy so large a portion of the Pentateuch. If one

be obligatory, so are all. They stand on the same ground. If they enforce the sabbatical observance of the seventh day, they also enforced that of the seventh year, when no Jew was to till his land. It is plain that we have only to do with that code as matter of history. Whatever we are bound to do which is there, we are bound to do by obligation derived from a different source. We must go back to nature, or forward to Christianity. We commit the very blunder against which Paul warned the Gentile Christians, and against which he wrote so much, and so earnestly. That whole system of ceremony is swept away. Nothing of Judaism remains, but the devotion and morality which were embodied in it; which in their nature are everlasting; and which remain and are obligatory, not because they were incorporated in Judaism, but because they *are* devotion and morality, the end of man's being, the perfection of his nature, the essence of his happiness.

A transfer of the obligation of the seventh day to the first, or a new institution for the first, of the same nature, is altogether fictitious. Nothing of the kind is narrated in the New Testament. The book of Acts and the Epistles show that the first Christians assembled on that day; but not *instead* of the old Sabbath. Those of them who were Jews always observed that, while the temple stood. The Gentile Christians had no day free from labour, till

the time of Constantine. Their meeting was often in the evening, when the business of the day was done. Besides, primitive practice does not constitute a divine institution. We see in Judaism what formality and precision are requisite for that. Where all is positive, all must be prescribed. There is nothing of this kind in relation to the Lord's day. The silence of Christ and the Apostles, and the merely incidental notice preserved of the fact, that the disciples used to meet on the Lord's day, clearly show that it was a voluntary observance.

Now is it not pernicious that something like a pious fraud should be practised in the use continually made of the fourth commandment? If it be no obligatory, why make the child and the adult repeat it as the ground of duty? If it be, then observe it on the day commanded. It is not less broken, being a positive institute, by observance on another day, than by not being observed at all. The command was not to observe one day in seven, but *the seventh day*. Observe it too, as the Jews were bound to observe it. In these particulars how inconsistent are modern Sabbatarians! O these are the things which, when the young and ignorant begin to reflect, disgust them with religion, and make them hastily conclude, that every thing so called is of the same character! This Sabbatarianism is a trap for consciences. It generates sin. The cul-

prits who so often confess that their crimes commenced with Sabbath-breaking, should make the ministers of religion reflect on what they are doing. Persuade a man that that was a great offence against God, which he did without any guilty thought or purpose, and you degrade his mind, and prepare it for violating the laws of morality. It is pernicious that any matter of ceremony should be elevated as this has been above the duties of justice and kindness. It sends people's thoughts and conscientiousness in the wrong direction. It elevates passive stupidity into righteousness, and condemns active usefulness as impiety. It misrepresents God. For the time and place, where and during which the Sabbath was of his appointment, it was not an arbitrary exaction by him of a portion of men's time; no such thing; it was appointed, because in the then state of the world, such an institution had its work to do in advancing the progress of humanity; it was made for man. It was part of that dispensation to which the world must ever owe so much. It was founded on that principle of utility which now man has to apply for himself. It was ordained for that period by God, the teacher of his rational children; not enforced in perpetuity by a supposed God, the arbitrary despot of ceremonial slaves. It is good that the Gospel should be vindicated from this kind of misrepresentation.

And now, dismissing men's reveries, and mis-

takes, and superstitions, let us come to the rational and useful view of this matter, and inquire into the true grounds of our own practice, which I take to be that of a voluntary separation of one day in seven, the first day of the week, for moral, intellectual, and Christian purposes. There are three motives to such a practice: the first, civil or political; the second, moral or religious; and the third, peculiarly Christian. They all draw in the same direction. It is good that, one day in seven, there should be a cessation of labour; it is good that, one day in seven, reflective people should meet together for the purposes of public worship and instruction; and it is good that this day should be a day so deeply interesting to us as Christians, so associated with the most momentous of all facts, so rich in past recollections and future hopes, as that day of the week on which Jesus rose from the dead.

1. It is good that, one day in seven, labour should be suspended. There is a social, civil, political expediency in the recurrence of a day of rest, at about that interval. A community has a right to make such a regulation for the advantage of its members. A government has a right to enforce it with the powers of government. Those powers have rarely been more usefully exerted. I do not mean that a government should ordain its religious consecration. I deny the right of human authority for religious legislation. Its assumption is an usurpa-

tion. And still worse than the direct assertion of such a claim, is the hypocrisy of endeavouring to procure reverence for its enactments, by investing them with a fictitious divine authority. But the simple question of cessation from labour is strictly within the province of civil government. Moreover, if put on this ground, such exceptions may be made, or tolerated, as common convenience requires. The right of regulation extends over the whole and all its parts. The law of rest, so far as we are now considering it, is properly a human law, and a wise and beneficent one. It is a happy immunity for all industrious classes, the master's best solace, and the workman's best protection. What would the condition of the poor be, if the day of rest were abolished?—at least where there is a large population, and an eager competition for work. They would be crushed to the very earth. Incessant toil would extinguish the mental light that is in them, and wear out the more rapidly their physical strength. They would not earn the more. Competition would keep down their own portion of the produce of their labour to that which would just subsist them. They would still earn only their daily bread by the sweat of their brow; but they would be seven days earning it, instead of six. Unvaried and unbroken toil is brutalizing. Even the provision for mere cessation is something for rationality, something for political freedom, something

for morality. Without it, labourers would go far back towards the state of slavery. It is a breach in their prison wall which lets in the light of intelligence. On this ground, as a public institution, let it stand. Let there be no interference with conscience. Let there be no pretensions of divine authority. Let it be law for the public good, 'without partiality and without hypocrisy.' When Moses instituted the Jewish Sabbath, divine authority was interposing to break the power of superstition and lead men on, till the dictate of power should become the impulse of reason. Be his memory blessed as God's agent for human good; but not honoured by ill-timed imitation, and unwarranted pretension. Ever may the right of the poor, and the good of all, be consecrated by the legislative sanction of a day of rest!

2. I come to the moral or religious motive; and here we must look to a different set of persons. We have shown the foundation on which the state should act; there is one equally broad and firm for the religionist, for the church. How are the truths of religion to be made known; how its social worship practised; how its duties enforced on the conscience; how its consolations ministered to the distressed; how its spirit excited to an energy which shall influence the heart and life; how its dominion extended over mankind; but by the stated assembling of ourselves together, and inviting others to join us; and thus encouraging one another to

love and to good works? We must have periodical meetings, and frequent ones. If men have to do so much for the physical support of themselves and families that they cannot be called together more frequently than once in seven days, they ought not, for the very reason that they are so deeply involved and so intensely occupied in such matters, to be called together seldomer than that. Did the laws of the land legitimate unceasing labour through the day, at least the evening should be seized and redeemed, at such an interval. This was what the Christians did, till the legislation of Imperial Rome enabled them to take the day. Such we may infer was the meeting at Troas, where Paul prolonged his speech till midnight, and their subsequent conversation, a farewell one, as they all knew, held on till the break of day. We cannot give less than this to purposes so important. Man's strength would fail in his worldly conflict, and his spirit faint within him, without this ever-recurring stimulus. He cannot be wholly ignorant, when once a week knowledge is proffered to his mind. He cannot be wholly animal, when every week brings *one* appeal to what is higher and better in his nature. He cannot be wholly selfish, when every week reminds him of his neighbour, and draws around men the bond of fraternity. He cannot sink into an unbroken dream of this world, when the very lights of heaven which measure his days cease not to bring him tidings of a world to come. He cannot be entirely without

God in the world, when every week begins with the acknowledgment of Him who made the world, rules it by his Providence, blesses it by his grace, and promises by his word immortality to its inhabitants. He who appreciates these mercies, for himself and others, will welcome the day of political rest, as the day of religious exercises and instruction. He will rejoice to hear, and to say, 'Come now, and let us go up unto the house of the Lord.' How superior is the voluntary association, thus redeeming the time, to the Jewish people in the authoritative restriction of their sabbath! Without that, as a preliminary, this might never have been; but the letter is dead now that the spirit hath given life. Religionists thus reasoning and acting, think not of things to be abstained from, but of things to be done. Their consciences are not beset with snares, and only engaged in the tremulous avoidance of what may be sinful, made so not by its nature but by positive appointment; but they go straightforward to the work of improvement. To be so employed is ever man's best and happiest course. It is not by being afraid all the day that this or that (innocent at other times) may be a desecration and a sin, and make God angry, that good is realized. It is by pursuing the object. It is by seeking instruction. It is by cultivating devotional feeling. It is by entering into the very spirit of religious observances. It is by coming with full purpose of

heart to our professed and honest aim. This will realize the end most effectually. It will make the Sunday, in the thoughts and feelings it produces during the week, as a fountain of living and running waters, sparkling in the sun, and fertilizing the earth, and hastening on their course in activity, and purity, and music, and gladness; while the ceremonial sabbath is but a standing pool, neither reflecting the sun, nor enriching the ground, and proud of its unwholesome torpidity of dark corruption. The angel must descend from heaven to trouble such waters, before they have any healing power. Heaven is the Christian's eternal sabbath; but the rest of heaven is the activity of benevolence.

3. To the civil and the religious principle, I said that another must be added, peculiarly Christian. It is well that the day of cessation from toil which the community requires, and the day of instruction and worship which religion requires, should coincide; that they should be the same day. Best of all is it that that day should be the day which proclaimed immortality to mankind by the resurrection of Christ. The very fact does something of that day's holy work upon the heart. The very fact is food for faith and hope. Every rising of that sun may make itself welcome to the eyes of those who are weary and heavy laden with this world's cares, for it ushers in the day of rest that tells them of a future world of rest. Every rising of that sun should

beam a joyous light upon the eyes of him who is bewildered in perplexities and doubts, for it calls attention to the truths which are the distracted soul's best guidance, directing to 'the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world.' Every rising of that sun is welcome to the aspirant after higher attainments and purer joys than those of earth, for it is the day of *his* revival who ascended to heaven as our forerunner. The rising of that sun is new life to those that mourn, it dawns in hope upon their sorrow, and tells them of each loved and lost one too, 'he is not here, he is risen.' The associations of the Jewish sabbath were but with creation; these are with redemption; they were supported by a theory, these cling around a fact; they were of the past, this is of the future; they were of life, this is of immortality Yes, this is the day when society should tell the sons of toil to rest. Yes, this is the day when religion should call the sons and daughters of God to assemble in their Father's house. Yes, this is the day when the Gospel should assert its power, and unfold its promises, and extend its triumphs and its blessings. There is propriety, there is reason, there is justice, there is benevolence, there is religion, in the selection, and its voluntary employment. It was made for man; this bearing of varied motives all on one point, it is good for him to feel; and the obligation it asserts is in the blessings it confers.

Christ's manner of speaking of the sabbath, and of acting upon it, were admirably adapted to accomplish the transition he contemplated from the religion of ceremony to that of spirituality. He often chose it for the time of miracle. That was 'work' to which even they could not consistently object: for the power was of God, and his reply was ready, 'my Father worketh hitherto, and I work.' He abolished not, formally, the Mosaic sabbath; he knew Providence was about to do that, by the dreadful catastrophe soon to come on Judea. He provided that, when it should pass away, there should be something purer, simpler, and better, to supply its place. It ill becomes his followers to go back towards what Paul called 'beggarly elements,' things 'passing away;' they should enter into the spirit of the Gospel, and rise from slavish ceremony and superstitious observance to rationality and utility; regarding the reformation and elevation of the human character and the multiplication of human happiness, as the great end of all; and all actions, exercises, instructions, assemblings, as the means; the scaffolding of the building,—the top stone of which shall at length be brought forth with joy, angels shouting, grace, grace, unto it. And so shall be erected and perfected our house of God eternal in the heavens.

SERMON XIX.

RELIGIOUS REFORMATION.

JEREMIAH vi. 16.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls."

ALTHOUGH divine revelation is so constituted as to accommodate itself to the progress of the human mind; so as to expand with the expansion of intellect; and, like an exhaustless mine of truth, yield the more richly the more of talent and of industry are brought to work on its resources; yet is it also true, and completely consistent, that its principles and spirit were perfect from the first and at the first; it is not in them, but in their applications and results, that the accommodation takes place to man's advancement; and a frequent appeal to them is needful to stem the course of the errors and corruptions which obtain from time to time. As to the first and fundamental principles of faith and con-

duct, our inquiry must be for the old paths; they alone are the good ways which will lead to a safe rest for our souls. And the antiquity to which we look should be the highest. Not the old ways of this or that sect or church, but of religion itself, and its authorized teachers, of Moses and Christ, of prophets and apostles, as delineated in the sacred Scriptures. This is the only antiquity entitled to authority. 'To the law and the testimony;' there is the rule, which must show whether we have the true light in us, or are bewildered in error and stumbling in darkness.

This appeal we are accustomed to make as to the differences of doctrine between ourselves and the rest of the Christian world. I think it becomes us to make that appeal at all proper times and in all proper ways; from the press and from the pulpit; to make it frequently, earnestly, and zealously. Our allegiance to the cause of knowledge and of truth demands it of us; and the vindication of our conduct in doing so, is, to my mind, complete and satisfactory.

But even if it were not so, there is another way in which our zeal is equally required, and where the duties and difficulties which some feel about efforts which have truth, abstractedly considered, for their object, can have no place. The departure from the doctrinal verity of the Gospel is not greater than that from its practical spirit. The

two are connected; zeal is justified by either; but as in relation to the latter it rests on grounds which are universally undeniable, its obligations ought to be universally admitted, and its power universally felt and exhibited.

To this I would now direct your attention; I would show you how much there is, in the Christian world, besides such doctrines as those of the trinity, satisfaction, eternal torment, and the like, which needs correction; how much there is which is practically wrong, mischievous, and melancholy; how much there is which will not bear the test, but which should nevertheless be brought to the test, of primitive Christianity; how much which calls on us, according to the opportunities of our several stations, for active, liberal, and persevering co-operation.

If it be said that, in the great work of reformation, we had better look to ourselves than to others, I say so too. It is our first concern that our own hearts be right in the sight of God. Of this we should never, never lose sight; and God grant us grace to pursue it so wisely and steadily as to accomplish the object, to our souls' salvation. But I say too, that looking to ourselves includes looking occasionally to others. I say that we do *not* look to ourselves effectually, if we allow indifference as to the prevalence in society of truly Christian modes of feeling and action. I say that our consciences are misinformed, sluggish, or unfaithful, if they allow

us to stand tamely by, and not exert ourselves, nor encourage and strengthen others in exertion, for aiding the triumph, over the opposite feelings, of those sentiments of liberty and liberality, of holiness, love, and hope, which constitute the spirit of the Gospel. Here the concerns of others are our own concerns, as the honest, consistent, and faithful followers of Christ.

I shall now therefore bring into contrast with the genuine spirit of Christianity, some of the practical evils which prevail among professed Christians, and against which we should bear our unswerving testimony.

The secularizing of Christianity, the making it a kingdom of this world, the blending and mixing up of its doctrines and worship with political considerations, is not one of the old ways in which the primitive Christians walked. The simplicity and spirituality of the Gospel cannot be impaired or obscured without mischief. Let princes and potentates, let magistrates and senators do it reverence; it deserves and demands their reverence; their personal and official, their public and their private homage; in itself and in the persons of its consistent professors; but let them not affect to be its patrons. The only righteous and useful establishment of Christianity by law, is the conducting of legislation on Christian principles. It is the upholding of justice and mercy; it is the direction of all

power to the public good; it is the preservation of the weak from the oppression of the strong; it is the assertion of the rights, and the advancement of the interests of humanity; it is the due apportionment of punishment to crime, so that there is only so much suffering inflicted as is needful to protect the innocent, and such suffering as best tends to amend the guilty: it is the securing to all full liberty of speech and worship, and holding an even balance between contending parties: this, and this alone, is an establishment of Christianity, consistent with Christianity. Now is it not an evil, and a crying evil, that there should ever be such a political adoption of the Gospel as that its ministry is brought into suspicion of subserviency to earthly greatness, and of being pursued merely as a lucrative and honourable avocation; as that its profession has annexed to it secular advantages: as that prejudice is created against its evidences by blending them with the dictates of legal authority; and as that free inquiry into its truths is obstructed by the national imposition of certain formularies? Are we not bound to tell the Christian world that all this is innovation and corruption? That these are not the old ways of Christians, but a devious path down a slippery steep, where, though gold may glitter by the way, Religion is in sore peril of being soiled and crippled? She loses her good name. She becomes confounded with the tricks by which men have sought to blindfold their

fellow-men that they might mislead and plunder them. She loses her independence, and is obliged to accept the appointments of a master in her own household, and to do a master's bidding. She has to learn the language of courts, and loses her simplicity of speech and manner. She loses the credit of her honest disciples, whose good works would adorn her doctrine, but who are lost in a crowd of hereditary, careless, hypocritical, or unthinking, and merely nominal professors. She appears like a thing of earth, and not a heavenly visitant. O, not thus should the glorious Gospel of the grace of God be exhibited! We should put in contrast with it that unworldly kingdom of Christ which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We should point to the New Testament annals of that band of brothers who were first called by it out of the world, and who, like their Master, were not of the world. We should drink into their spirit, and uphold their testimony, and act upon their principles, and pursue their objects. We should keep the holy name of our religion, as we should keep our own souls, unspotted from the world.

There is another practical evil, yet more extended, for spiritual despotism has a wider and more withering influence than even political servility: I mean the suppression or obstruction of that liberty of thought and speech on religious matters, which

the first Christians possessed, which the Apostles sanctioned, and which our great Master himself authorized, employed, and appealed to. To promote a fearless range of mind, and a frank manliness of speech, was one of the objects of the Gospel, as it is, to human character, one of the surest safeguards of worth and means of excellence. To cherish them is to provide for a larger developement of the mental and moral faculties of our nature, than can, in any other way, be attained. But what can be more discouraged than these are by modern religionists? Why if avowed difference from the avowed notions of the rest bring only the penalty of exclusion from a voluntary society, professedly Christian, it is pernicious enough. And this is the lightest form of the prohibition which is issued by every petty aspirant for sectarian domination. Hence in our country there is scarcely such a thing as individuality of religious opinion. People think in parties. Bodies of men have creeds of their own formation; but members, no more than if they were literally members, their only office mechanically to obey the dictates of a ruling intellect and will. If they dare to think for themselves, they are cut off, and cast off, to find some other frame into which they may be fitted, and where they may be made alike subservient. Tell where a man worships, and you also tell what he would answer to this or that question of doctrine, and even how he will interpret

this or that text of Scripture. It is as if minds were cast in a mould, and faiths furnished wholesale, of the same size and pattern, like uniforms or liveries. Is this a state of things for intellect to grow in, or can souls be ripened under these conflicting, chilling, and blighting influences? Let Trinitarianism, or Unitarianism, or any other *ism*, be true or false; but let every Christian, without let or hinderance, be free, be stimulated, to exercise his mind, and to declare his mind, on those or any other tenets which are in the word of God, or which claim to be there. It is for his own benefit, it is for the benefit of the world, that he should. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' That is the Gospel law of uniformity; the only uniformity which is absolutely imperative. Did it but prevail, how speedily and gloriously would truth emerge from amid the multitudinous clouds of error, scattering them hither and thither, and irradiating a world they had so long obscured and terrified! Nor would even this grand result be the grandest result that would follow. That would be the advancement of the human mind; the maturing of individual intellect and character. Babes in Christ would grow up into strong men, instead of dwindling in everlasting infancy, bound in everlasting leading-strings. Here, then, is a ground of zeal, for the Christian philanthropist, and the

tian philosopher, which assumes the truth of

ular faith, the importance of no particular

doctrine, the merits of no particular society, but which simply aims at restoring to God's disinherited children their alienated mental rights, and practically emancipating them with the liberty wherewith Christ, in the spirit of his Gospel, has made them free.

An enormous practical evil may be indicated in the notions of Conversion which are very commonly inculcated. Sinners are preached to in the hope of producing an immediate change in their hearts, before which they are totally corrupt, and after which they are represented as the sure inheritors of heaven, were death that instant to close their probation. This is a snare for souls, a fearful delusion, which the friends of man and of goodness cannot contemplate without being moved to pity and to zeal. What can be worse than to tell one who has been an habitual violator of the laws of God, perhaps of those of his country, that, by any such momentary operation, his sins can be blotted out? The raptures of a poor deceived creature, in that awful state, are enough to make a wise man mad, and a good man melancholy. Think of the profanation of religion which such scenes imply; and the adoption of its purest and noblest expressions, of the language of its holiest prophets and apostles in their closest communings with heaven and their own hearts, by those who can have no participation in their holy and elevated sentiments, and who stain what they utter by the defilement and debasement of their own

this or that text of Scripture. It is as if minds were cast in a mould, and faiths furnished wholesale, of the same size and pattern, like uniforms or liveries. Is this a state of things for intellect to grow in, or can souls be ripened under these conflicting, chilling, and blighting influences? Let Trinitarianism, or Unitarianism, or any other *ism*, be true or false; but let every Christian, without let or hinderance, be free, be stimulated, to exercise his mind, and to declare his mind, on those or any other tenets which are in the word of God, or which claim to be there. It is for his own benefit, it is for the benefit of the world, that he should. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' That is the Gospel law of uniformity; the only uniformity which is absolutely imperative. Did it but prevail, how speedily and gloriously would truth emerge from amid the multitudinous clouds of error, scattering them hither and thither, and irradiating a world they had so long obscured and terrified! Nor would even this grand result be the grandest result that would follow. That would be the advancement of the human mind; the maturing of individual intellect and character. Babes in Christ would grow up into strong men, instead of dwindling in everlasting infancy, bound in everlasting leading-strings. Here, then, is a ground of zeal, for the Christian philanthropist, and the Christian philosopher, which assumes the truth of no particular faith, the importance of no particular

doctrine, the merits of no particular society, but which simply aims at restoring to God's disinherited children their alienated mental rights, and practically emancipating them with the liberty wherewith Christ, in the spirit of his Gospel, has made them free.

An enormous practical evil may be indicated in the notions of Conversion which are very commonly inculcated. Sinners are preached to in the hope of producing an immediate change in their hearts, before which they are totally corrupt, and after which they are represented as the sure inheritors of heaven, were death that instant to close their probation. This is a snare for souls, a fearful delusion, which the friends of man and of goodness cannot contemplate without being moved to pity and to zeal. What can be worse than to tell one who has been an habitual violator of the laws of God, perhaps of those of his country, that, by any such momentary operation, his sins can be blotted out? The raptures of a poor deceived creature, in that awful state, are enough to make a wise man mad, and a good man melancholy. Think of the profanation of religion which such scenes imply; and the adoption of its purest and noblest expressions, of the language of its holiest prophets and apostles in their closest communings with heaven and their own hearts, by those who can have no participation in their holy and elevated sentiments, and who stain what they utter by the defilement and debasement of their own

this or that text of Scripture. It is as if minds were cast in a mould, and faiths furnished wholesale, of the same size and pattern, like uniforms or liveries. Is this a state of things for intellect to grow in, or can souls be ripened under these conflicting, chilling, and blighting influences? Let Trinitarianism, or Unitarianism, or any other *ism*, be true or false; but let every Christian, without let or hinderance, be free, be stimulated, to exercise his mind, and to declare his mind, on those or any other tenets which are in the word of God, or which claim to be there. It is for his own benefit, it is for the benefit of the world, that he should. 'Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.' That is the Gospel law of uniformity; the only uniformity which is absolutely imperative. Did it but prevail, how speedily and gloriously would truth emerge from amid the multitudinous clouds of error, scattering them hither and thither, and irradiating a world they had so long obscured and terrified! Nor would even this grand result be the grandest result that would follow. That would be the advancement of the human mind; the maturing of individual intellect and character. Babes in Christ would grow up into strong men, instead of dwindling in everlasting infancy, bound in everlasting leading-strings. Here, then, is a ground of zeal, for the Christian philanthropist, and the Christian philosopher, which assumes the truth of no particular faith, the importance of no particular

doctrine, the merits of no particular society, but which simply aims at restoring to God's disinherited children their alienated mental rights, and practically emancipating them with the liberty wherewith Christ, in the spirit of his Gospel, has made them free.

An enormous practical evil may be indicated in the notions of Conversion which are very commonly inculcated. Sinners are preached to in the hope of producing an immediate change in their hearts, before which they are totally corrupt, and after which they are represented as the sure inheritors of heaven, were death that instant to close their probation. This is a snare for souls, a fearful delusion, which the friends of man and of goodness cannot contemplate without being moved to pity and to zeal. What can be worse than to tell one who has been an habitual violator of the laws of God, perhaps of those of his country, that, by any such momentary operation, his sins can be blotted out? The raptures of a poor deceived creature, in that awful state, are enough to make a wise man mad, and a good man melancholy. Think of the profanation of religion which such scenes imply; and the adoption of its purest and noblest expressions, of the language of its holiest prophets and apostles in their closest communings with heaven and their own hearts, by those who can have no participation in their holy and elevated sentiments, and who stain what they utter by the defilement and debasement of their own

minds and characters. Think of the notions of heaven thus propagated through society. Think of the associates assigned to the spirits of just men made perfect, associates whose forced companionship here would be the loathsomest infliction that tyranny could devise. What must be the state for whose enjoyments such converts are instantaneously qualified? Think of the prospect of impunity thus held out to transgression—how the force of religion is enfeebled; the necessity of reformation indefinitely postponed; and judgment to come made a form and a mockery from which the repentance of an instant may bear the culprit harmless, and carry him through triumphantly! and above all, think how the notion of morality, of goodness, of righteousness, is hereby lowered and debased! What is the Christian character worth, if it may be thus attained? But little, either in itself, or to society. It ceases to be that pure and glorious object which has called forth the loftiest aspirations of the loftiest minds; which made Apostles press forward to something yet far before them; which the longest life of moral labour did but advance towards by a gradual and progressive realization; and which, though to be striven for by every Christian, has but one immaculate exhibition, in the character of Christ. Here is no mere theory at stake. Here is no barren critical disputation. Here is no dark doctrinal discussion. It is the very principle of moral goodness, which demands

exertion, to preserve it unsullied, to uphold its power, and to vindicate the dignity assigned to it alike by the dictates of nature and the declarations of the Gospel. An earnest desire and struggle for this, is not party spirit; it is not sectarian zeal; it is being 'zealously affected,' not merely 'for a good thing,' but for goodness itself.

Another great blessing to society, which the prevalence of rational and liberal principles of religion would confer, would be the demolition of that prejudice and bigotry which make so many really devout people judge unkindly, and think disparagingly, of the characters and moral state of those who differ from them on points of doctrine. This too is an evil of large amount and dark malignity. It is a constant, and widely-extended, and aggravated act of injustice. For that honesty of profession, which is a moral obligation and a Christian duty, the rejecter of popular doctrines is deprived of the fair estimation, and the kindly feelings to which he is righteously entitled. He does not rank where he ought to rank in good men's thoughts and good men's hearts. He is deprived of a favourable opinion due to his deserts, which is as unjust as if he were deprived of property accumulated by his exertions. Prejudice will not render 'honour to whom honour is due,' gratitude to whom gratitude, affection to whom affection, is due. Could these things be represented by money, the withholding

of them would be a tangible offence, which the law would put down. They cannot be so represented; they are infinitely more precious; the injustice is so much the more grievous; but the redress is only in the diffusion of liberality. Nor is the evil less to the perpetrator than to the object. Moral wrong is never committed with impunity. Prejudice excludes mental light. Bigotry is at least partial blindness, and to it is 'knowledge at one entrance quite shut out.' And while it darkens the mind, it cripples the affections. A thousand kindly feelings are sacrificed to narrowness and bitterness. Christianity is disgraced. Men do not know that God sent Christ, as he prayed they might, by the fact that his disciples love one another. Apostolic authority is levelled before sectarian bigotry. The new commandment of Christ is already made obsolete by the newer decree of dogmatical intolerance. The harmony and power of combined exertions for purposes of common utility are impaired and frittered away. There is alike an invasion of the comfort of social intercourse and the energy of public beneficence. Does not all this imperatively require amendment? Is it not a lawful object of Christian zeal? In pursuing it, are we not in the path of duty? Yes: as much in that of moral and religious duty as in our own personal worship and meditations? Does it not combine with them, and are we not saving ourselves when we are benefiting

others? If it was worth a divine interposition to give the Apostle Peter a clear and heart-felt perception of the truth that 'in every nation he that feareth God and worketh righteousness is accepted of him;' it must certainly be worth some human zeal, sacrifice, and effort, to bring home that truth to the millions of souls which are bound up in the belief of the exclusive excellence of the little faction to which they belong. Here is an object far superior to many, to which philanthropists, whom the world worthily holds in reverence, have consecrated all their years, and devoted all their powers, and even sacrificed their lives.

I shall mention but one more topic, and that is the displacing the gloomy views in religion which too much abound, by those which, as they are more Christian in their origin, are more, O! how much more, productive of happiness in their influences. There is an immense sum of suffering in the world resulting from misrepresentations of the divine character and government. The spirit of love, as the great spring of action, is too commonly displaced by that of fear, and most true is the brief and emphatic assertion of the Apostle John that 'fear hath torment.' In some systems, men are terrified into religion, and terrified by religion, and they look up to God with terror, and forward to futurity with terror. Their duty is servility; their motive, the apprehension of punishment; and their heaven, an

escape from hell. And those whose views are brightest for themselves, have still so dreadful a prospect for others, for a reprobated world, as only leaves the alternative of selfish indifference or heart-corroding anguish. To such interpretations of Christianity our simpler and brighter views of it bear the same relative character of *Gospel*, or glad tidings, which Christianity itself did to a benighted world. They are light in the soul's darkness; freedom to mental captivity; and the proclamation of a sabbath jubilee for the rational creation. What better blessing can be sent abroad than hope, a generous hope, for humanity itself? What can extend and elevate the affections like the anticipation of a final universal redemption? We can scarcely confer a greater benefit on any good man than to open his ears to hear that sound *for all*, which he has only listened to as a promise for a selected portion of the human race, even though in that portion *he* was included. It is like being present at the descent of an angel from heaven, proclaiming, 'Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you (you, mankind, the human race) is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord!' and joining with all the past and present and future generations of the world, earth's nations and the 'multitude of the heavenly host' in the response of glory to God and love to man.

Away, then, with the notion that there is nothing moral, nothing practical, nothing which affects men's hearts and happiness at stake, in the religious differences which exist. Even if it could not be shown of any peculiar doctrines that they are God's truth, and therefore worthy of man's earnest efforts for their dissemination, there is still ample inducement for benevolent and energetic exertion. But there are great and simple truths, though long obscured, of which this can be shown; and the combination, mental and moral, is one which should leave no hesitation in our minds—no lukewarmness in our hearts—no inconsistency in our conduct. It is our clearest duty—our best interest—our noblest aim—our highest happiness, to 'serve God with our spirits in the Gospel of his Son;' to advance Christ's spiritual kingdom; and by rightly striving to advance that in others, we also advance it in our own hearts; nor can we establish its full dominion in our own hearts while we are indifferent to its extension around us. Let us, then, pursue conjointly what the spirit of the Gospel declares cannot be sundered. It is said of the all-perfect God, that 'he is good and does good continually.' Nor can we really *be* good, without doing good; or do good, on Christian principles, without being good. By loving our neighbour as ourselves, we work out his benefit and our own salvation.

SERMON XX.

PROBATION AND JUDGMENT.

HEBREWS ix. 27.

'But after this (death) the judgment.'

To any one who should open the New Testament for the first time, and his eye fall on this passage, it would seem a very bold assertion. Man knows not what the morrow may bring forth. The changes of life are continually baffling his calculations. He frequently finds himself in circumstances, the imagination of which a few months or years before, would have been dismissed as a wild and most incredible romance. And, yet, here is one who assumes to tell us, not what will come after this week or year, but after this life itself shall have closed; and who affirms that, when we shall have been removed from all communication with the world in which we live, and the beings by whom we are surrounded; that when we shall have reached what seems to our senses and experience the final close

of our existence, that after this will come the judgment!

But the notion of boldness vanishes when further examination shows the writer's authority. He was a disciple of the man of inspiration, the man of miracle, the man of the resurrection, Jesus Christ. He had learned this after-death fact from one who was in an after-death existence. This truth of futurity was learned from the commissioned revealer of futurity. It comes through him to the world, from the author of life and death, the giver of time, the possessor of eternity. This assertion is not pretence, but reality; not assumption, but docility; not pride, but benevolence. In the name of Him who had risen from the dead, he repeats the prediction that to all, after death, should come the judgment.

And while the simple and conclusive evidence of historical fact had thus furnished authority for the declaration, and divested it of all that would have looked like arrogance, it may be further observed, that it is not so devoid of indications and corroborations in the course of events in this life, as most would perhaps at first suppose. They take but a very imperfect view of the *rationale* of the subject who look only at the dead and dissolving body, though they may watch it from senselessness to decomposition, see it resolving into its original elements, and those elements entering into new combinations, springing up in vegetation, or becom-

ing again incorporated in some other form of animal existence. The voice of nature utters oracles from other places besides the tomb. Ill would he write the history even of the corn-field who should only look at it after the seed was sown, and before that seed had sprung up; and who, on the strength of his negative observation, should assert that after winter would come no spring. The experience of another year, it may be said, would correct his error. True; and therefore, it should not be hastily concluded that the other error will not be corrected by the experience of another life. But I think that, could the case be supposed for a moment, the acute observer of a single year of vegetation would have some reason to anticipate, not very distinctly perhaps, but some reason to anticipate, that what he saw was not all; that something else was to happen; that he was not in the midst of a scene of mere destruction. And so I think also, that besides its proof of fact, of revelation, and of miracle, the assertion in the text is not unsupported by what may be noticed in the world around us and within us; but that there are various considerations which give it a degree of rationality and probability. It is worth while to observe these. They may recommend the doctrine itself to those who demur to the conclusiveness of the proofs on which it is rested by Christianity. They may re-act upon the evidences of the Gospel, and dispose the mind more readily to admit proof

of a truth whose harmony with reason and fact has been evinced to it previously. And the correspondences which we are led to trace may be in themselves useful by suggesting various lessons of devout feeling and moral duty.

There is a reasonableness in the tenet that this life is a state of probation, and the next of retribution; because this life is itself made up of a succession of periods which bear alternately and mutually the relation of trial and of judgment. It is probable that after death comes judgment, because before, long before death, also comes judgment; after each division of our being comes another division which is as a judgment to that which preceded; and as so we go on, from the cradle to the grave, it may be anticipated that so we shall go on from time to eternity.

The first world of humanity is the nursery, and the next little world of humanity is the school; the first passing of the child from one to the other is the great event of his short life, it is going into a new state of being; and the school stands to the nursery in the relation of a season of judgment to one of preparation and probation. The nursery life ends, never to be resumed, and after its termination comes a judgment upon it. The child goes into a society, which he was not born into, as he was into that of the family; and the arrangements of which are constituted on a different principle, for a

different purpose, and by a different authority. But every acquirement, faculty, disposition of his previous life, *tells* in his new condition, and becomes the source of pleasure or uneasiness. The little tyrant of infancy has to pay for his former domination by learning to endure the control of others. The little idler suffers the penalty of shame for his comparative backwardness. Young kindness attracts kindness for its appropriate recompense, and selfishness is sentenced to dislike, and cowardice to scorn. There is a mighty variation of degree in the happiness or suffering which awaits a child at school, as the natural and necessary, but not less retributory result of its former little life. He takes his stand, according to his desert, as desert is estimated by his comrades. He is no longer shielded by the favouritism, or annoyed by the prejudices of the family. If the one have made him assuming, he will be humbled, and that with no slight pain. If the other have made him sullen, he will be ridiculed or shunned. If he has been well trained for the occupation and fellowship of the school, he will find plenty of stimulus and enjoyment. And this judgment becomes in turn a probation, to be followed by another judgment upon it and the character of its influences. The world is to the school what the school is to the nursery. The happiness or misery of manhood are a judgment upon boyhood, as *they* were on childhood. The scene shifts again into

a new state of being. The youth departs the life of the academical world, and is born into that of the business world. Then comes another judgment. The affairs of active and social life soon make retribution felt for the merits or misdeeds of youth. They put to the test the worth of the information he has been accumulating or neglecting. It is soon seen whether it be of the right sort. If not, his ears must often ring and tingle with the world's laugh at his conceit of scholarship. Rank is taken on a new principle; and many of the first are last, and of the last first. The tastes he has cultivated, the associates he has selected, the principles he has imbibed, the character he has formed,—all are tried by their fitness for this larger and higher world. If the wrong book have been studied, and the wrong faculty developed in the boy, the man must pay the penalty. It will take him a weary while to repair the errors of those years. If his school-life of probation have not kept its end in sight, the practical judgment of the world will condemn him to be jostled, cheated, and insulted. Acuteness, observation, useful knowledge, perseverance,—these will be sure of their reward. And so the world passes judgment on the school. Various alternations may be picked out of the totality of human life, which bear a similar relation to one another, and show how this principle pervades existence. Health and sickness are, to each other, probation and judg-

ment. In sickness, men are made to feel accordingly as health has been used or abused. What a poor and pitiable wretch in illness is he whose mind and heart have not been fortified with good principles and feelings! In his impatience, his sullenness, his querulousness; the failure of resources within, which he has not accumulated; the failure of affection from without, which he has not conciliated; the failure of hopes beyond, which he has not acquired; he is judged according to his deeds. And sickness is probation too, as well as judgment. He who improves it, who makes the most of the compulsive retirement which it imposes, as he afterwards goes into the world a wiser and a better man, so will he be in the world a more useful and a happier man. The same thing may be said of solitude and society. He who rightly employs the one has most enjoyment in the other. They who waste the hours of solitude, know nothing of the best and purest pleasures of society. The triflers of society are condemned to irksomeness in solitude. Religious duties and worldly occupations occur in continual interchange. They follow the same law. There are those who know that those beautiful expressions in the Psalms, of delight in the house of the Lord, are not obsolete emotions, nor the exaggeration of poetical diction. They have felt their reality. Their hearts have glowed within them. In prayer, they have prayed; and in praise, they have given thanks to God; and

in the truths of religion they have felt the descent upon their souls of a heavenly spirit, and the growth in their hearts of a spiritual life. It is their reward, in this ever-returning judgment, their sabbath reward for well-spent weeks, for laborious, honourable, and useful days. Nor will the man who honestly endeavours to improve by these services lose his recompense. He is preparing himself for the world, and while in it will find himself above it, the possessor of a peace which it can neither give nor take away. And after all these vicissitudes and alternations, comes *old age*, the great earthly judgment upon the occupations of youth and of maturity. A comfortable, an honourable, a happy, and a hopeful old age, is no chance bestowment, no mere prize in the lottery of life, no unaccountable accident, divested of all connexion with a 'foregone conclusion.' There are many of whom we can confidently tell, long before the time comes, that such an old age will not be theirs. 'Their deeds are open beforehand, going to judgment.' O what varieties there are in circumstances,—the judgment on former care or mismanagement! O what varieties there are in the capacity which remains for enjoyment,—the fruits of former cultivation or neglect! O what varieties there are in that benignant influence on younger minds, which must be one of earth's best delights,—the result of character proved through many years! O what varieties there are in recol-

lections, the blessed spirits or spectre ghosts of life's crimes or virtues! O what varieties there are of anticipation, the prospect of the future growing out of the past, and judging the past, and conferring the benediction of hope, or the condemnation of apprehension!

And how naturally, then, we may presume that the same system will continue. We have a glimpse of the principle on which the operations of Providence are conducted, and may argue by analogy to its future application. As each period of life is followed by a judgment, so we may expect will life's own final period here, in its recommencement hereafter. And as each of these earthly judgments embraces not only the portion of time which immediately preceded, but includes all that had passed before that; as the judgment of maturity is not only on the school, but on that as including the nursery too; and that of old age, not only on maturity, but on maturity as inclusive of all earlier times; (for even in hoary hairs, the sins of a man's youth may compass him about;) so should we expect the future judgment, not to be only on old age; not to regard the faith or repentance of a dying moment; but to be on the whole life, and the whole character which is its result; 'it shall be rendered to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are

contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil.'

I would have you remark that these successive judgments in life are by no means to be considered as perfectly, and from the first, judgments 'according to righteousness;' but at the same time, that they are so *progressively;* and progressively both in the individual and in society. They are the more so in each as he advances in life; they are the more so in every stage of our existence as the world advances in wisdom. The enjoyments and sufferings to which children are subjected by parents are often measured by a very different standard from that of the child's moral and lasting good. The child is called *good* when the parent is gratified; it may be by the child's vanity. The child is called *naughty*, when the parent is annoyed; it may be by the child's inquisitiveness or sincerity. Practically, parents make the laws of children's morality, and do not forget to put the consulting of their own convenience among the virtues. At school, the young as well as the old; the playmate as well as the taskmaster, come in for a share of the influence which operates on character and happiness. Their united voice pronounces a sounder judgment than that of the parent. But still a very imperfect one. It is often corrected, and sometimes reversed, by the world. And the perfect man of

the world is not a man of God. He is in harmony with existing institutions, opinions, tendencies; but in them how much there is of ignorance, error, selfishness, and vice! The success of maturity is not, by much, so sound a test of real worth as the peacefulness and hope of old age. *There* is the nearest approach towards the judgment of God, and the righteous dispensations of futurity. The individual has gone through a succession of trials, each superior to the preceding, and at last he goes to that bar from which there is no appeal, because it is that of omniscient truth and love, to which all the rest were preparatory. And as they are in the order of progression to the individual, so are they all improving in the improvement of society. There is a great advance from Solomon's proverb to Paul's precept: the first, 'He that spareth the rod spoileth the child;' and the latter, 'Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.' With all that is said about the love of offspring, it is an instinct that yet needs much enlightenment to make it a pure moral principle. However it does make progress. And so does the school. In our days, the character of utility has become much more legibly impressed on education. Nor are the maxims and institutions of social life either fixed or retrograde. It is the duty of all, it is the especial work of Christians, to aid this progress, in all these

departments. We should aim at bringing the family, the school, the community, all nearer to the Christian standard. They should be moralized. The growth of truth, righteousness, and love, is the ascent of earth towards heaven. Man's judgment should be rectified by degrees to bring it to accordance with the judgment of God. What we expect after death, should be our guidance in what we do before death.

In the history of Christ, our great exemplar, we see this doctrine, as we do all Christian doctrines. His mission was a judgment, an approving judgment, on the preparation of his early life. He fulfilled his work so perfectly, because thirty years of preparatory seclusion had been passed so wisely and holily. Had he remained as ignorant as Adam, he might, when the temptation came, have fallen as Adam fell. Had he not subdued self-glory more than even Moses, he might in some miracle have sinned with his lips, and not given God the glory, as Moses at the waters of Meribah. Had he not arrived at more enlightened conceptions of the divine character than Jonah, he might, when the storm was brooding, have thought, like him, of flying from the presence of the Lord. Say not that he was a man of sorrows; suffering is not punishment; and the miseries of benevolence are happier than the happiness of selfishness. He had lived to be the Christ, and in being the Christ, he

was rewarded. And this again was the probation to a further judgment. He had *his* judgment after death. His work had its crown when his Father raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

In the contemplation, then, of this providential plan, let us discipline ourselves, and be diligent in that culture of the heart which shall not lose its reward. There is no great stretch of imagination; there is no vast and indistinct remoteness of thought, in the notion of *after death the judgment.* It is brought home to us, if, in an observant spirit, and with the light of divine truth, we look around us. 'The judgment is set; and the books are opened;' though the full contents are not yet disclosed, nor the final award pronounced. The doctrine of judgment resolves itself into the question of immortality. There is a change of circumstances implied in the idea of immortality, which illustrates the retributory nature of the world to come. Immortal man cannot be dependent on food, nor can there, therefore, be the necessity of labour, nor any of its results, in wealth, rank, power, and all the other consequences so abundant here. Now mere existence in a world where wealth is unknown must be a judgment of condemnation on those bond-slaves of Mammon who here only exist for its attainment. Mere existence in a world where all earthly distinction of rank is abolished must be a judgment of condemnation on the vain ambition that lives in others'

admiring eyes and obsequious homage. Mere existence in a world where sense is but the agent of mind, must be a judgment of condemnation on those whose pleasure is nothing better than animal gratification. Mere existence in a world where the perfections of Deity will be so exhibited as that their display is called his presence, must be a judgment of condemnation on profanity. And the same process that punishes must also reward. The circumstances which are torture to the avaricious, the vain, the sensual, and the profane, must be blessedness to the generous, the meek, the pure, and the devout. They only make another ascent in the graduated scale of being. True, it is hidden from them; but how much knew they of the school, when they were infants in the nursery? How much knew they of the business of this bustling world, when they were boys at school? They know it is under the direction of the same universal Father; and, therefore, they trustingly exclaim, 'Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.'

THE END.

WILLIAM CLOWES, Printer, Duke-street, Lambeth.